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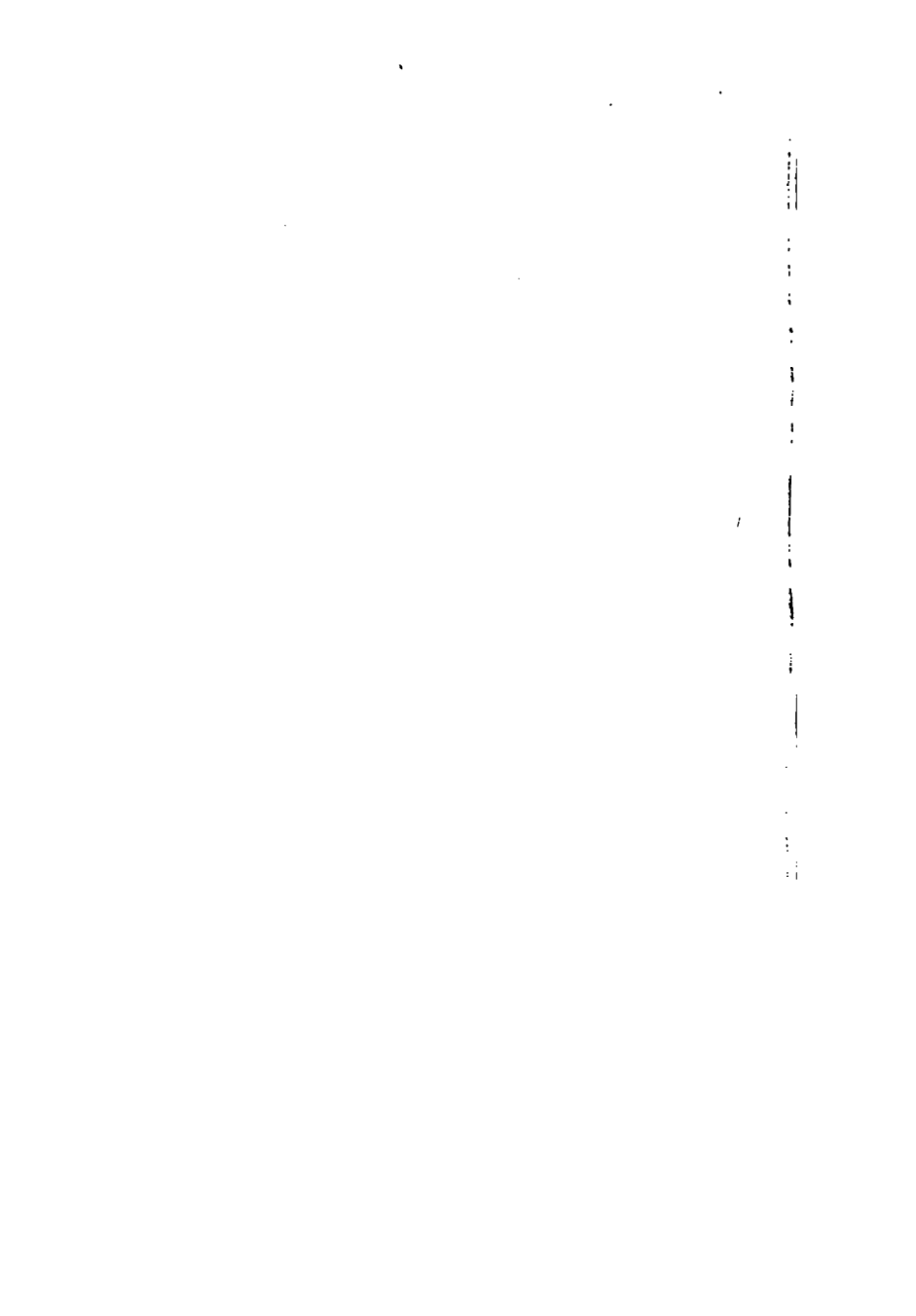


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A ward in chancery;

a novel,

by

Mrs. Alexander [pseud.] of  
Hector, Mrs. Annie (French) 1825-1902.

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New York:  
D. Appleton and Co.  
1894.

W. S. M.



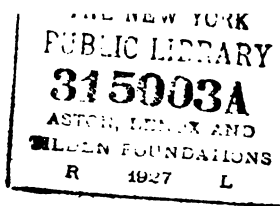


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## A WARD IN CHANCERY.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### TRANSFORMATION.

INNER-HOUR was past in the severely genteel residence situated in Chichester Gardens, Bayswater, that fine quarter of the upper *bourgeoisie*, where, among well-kept houses, none showed greater marks of care, had a more abundant supply of flowers in the windows, fresher muslin curtains, brighter brasses, nor snowier steps, than No. 21, the abode of Thomas Landon, Esquire, of that well-known firm Redman, Landon and Kellett, solicitors, of Great Gorman Street, E. C. The interior was worthy of the outside. There was an air of perennial youth about the mansion and its finishing, which bespoke incessant cleaning, studious renovation, and frequent renewals. Yet a certain sense of depression pervaded the spotless passages and apartments, for one shrank with horror from the probability of finding dust in those sacred precincts, or leaving a smudge of mud on the immaculate mats.

During this restful period of the day anyone acquainted with the habits and customs of Chichester Gardens, and the squares and terraces around that desirable locality generally, and of the Landon family in particular, could predict without hesitation that Mr. Landon would

be found studying the evening paper in his special and rather *un-easy* chair; Mrs. Landon established beside her work-table, occupied with a long strip of silk embroidery intended for a mantel border; and Miss Landon, the baby of the family, sitting on the balcony among the mignonette boxes and hyacinths, reading the last popular novel from Mudie's, or, as the season was early and exceptionally fine, exchanging ideas, or what they considered ideas, with some confidential young friend and neighbour in the general pleasure-ground on which the mansions opened at the back. On such fine evenings Charles, the younger son, generally lit a cigar and sallied forth, if Miss Lorrimer, the beauty of the gardens, did not want him to practice with her for some tennis competition, whereat she was anxious to make a brilliant success. But on this especial evening our supposed prophet would have been "out" in his reckoning, for, wonder of wonders, Mr. Landon was away, and his wife, son, and daughter, were gathered in the drawing-room engaged in unusually animated conversation respecting a letter just arrived by the last post from the head of the house. It had been expected, and both the son and daughter had stayed indoors to hear its contents. They waited patiently until Mrs. Landon had perused the epistle, and then Charlie cried, "Now then, mother, what's the news?"

"Yes, do tell us what she is like," urged his sister.

"Your father seems to suffer greatly from the heat in Paris; I hope he will escape an attack of fever; for, besides the heat, he has much to annoy him, and I must say I greatly dread this girl coming here. Her upbringing has been so strange, she can hardly be a suitable companion for you, Emily."

"Does my father say what she is like?" asked Emily.

"No, he does not notice looks much; he says—where

is it—oh, here—‘I called on my niece the afternoon of the day on which I arrived. The place she lives in is most undesirable; it is in a narrow and not over clean street, and on the fourth storey; the room was sordid and untidy, nor was the relative with whom she resides either neat or ladylike. The young person herself is somewhat forbidding, and does not seem to recognize the friendly spirit which actuated me in going personally to seek her, and although exceedingly quiet in manner, is, I fear, somewhat obstinate. I explained to her that she had been made a ward in chancery for the better protection of her property and to lighten the responsibility to myself. She is evidently reluctant to reside under my roof, and positively refuses to leave Paris until she procures a complete outfit, of which she seems, I admit, much in need. I explained that I could not prolong my absence, whereupon she remarked that she did not expect I could, nor did she need my escort, as, considering she had taken care of herself and her father since she was thirteen, she was quite capable of travelling alone; on this point, however, I was firm, and the matter was finally arranged, as I find one of the young women who board with this Madame Carrichon is coming over to take an engagement in England, and can accompany Andrée Nugent.’”

“Andrée!” repeated Charlie in a tone of astonishment, “what a name!”

“It is French for Andrew,” explained his sister.

“Miss Andrew Nugent,” cried Charlie, with a burst of laughter. “By Jove, the governor is bringing us a queer importation. You and the mater have your work cut out for you, Emily.”

“I must say I think it would have been wiser and better in every way if your father had placed his ward in *some high-class establishment* for young ladies,” said

Mrs. Landon, with a sigh, and resumed her reading of the letter. "‘Madame Carrichon is a very objectionable person, and talked volubly all the time I was in her presence in a loud, harsh tone, and although I could not understand what she said, I rather think her remarks were hostile and uncomplimentary. I am thankful to say, however, that I have handed my ward a sufficient cheque for her outfit and travelling expenses, though not all she wanted; straitened as her circumstances have been, she does not seem to recognize the value of money—‘set a beggar on horseback,’ etc. (I will not finish the proverb). I am therefore free to return, and hope to be with you on Wednesday to dinner, and very thankful to leave this hot, noisy town; all else when we meet. With love to Emily, etc.’" Mrs. Landon would have blushed to read aloud the concluding line, "your affectionate husband," to her children; it seemed too confidential and familiar.

"I had no idea my father would return so soon," said Emily, in a tone which did not exactly express joy at the prospect; "I wonder what Richard will say?"

"Oh, he was always in favour of keeping the heiress under our own special thumb," replied Charlie, who was the liveliest and most modern of the Landon family. "But I am afraid she is deucedly plain—‘forbidding’ is an appalling term! I hope she will not look fearfully common; my father ought not to have left her to her own devices in the matter of dress—she will make a guy of herself."

"I am not afraid of that," observed Emily; "French women generally have taste."

"But how on earth can she be a gentlewoman, brought up, as she has been, among quite common people?"

"*Well, my dears, we must try and do our duty by her*

by giving her every advantage and the best advice," said Mrs. Landon. "I suppose she speaks English, at all events, as your father seems to have understood her."

"I suppose we must take her to Mrs. Kellett's dance on the 27th," Emily added with a sigh, "and I shall have to look after her and provide her with partners."

"The partners will provide themselves," said Charlie, laughing, "when they know the amount she represents! What extraordinary luck, to be sure!—and I believe the late sainted Sarah Jane Witham never beheld her!"

Mrs. Landon's gentle and rather anxious countenance relaxed at the mild jest.

Charlie Landon was a fair, blue-eyed man, tall and slim, with flaxen moustaches which scarcely hid his laughing lips—a careless, light-hearted young fellow, and his mother's favourite. He supplied the youthful element in the household, for though his sister loved gaiety, she never provided it. The elder son, Richard, was rather an awe-inspiring member of the family; he had a soul above solicitorship, and insisted on being called to the Bar, thanks to the favour of a whimsical and very elderly aristocratic client of his father's, who had taken a fancy to him and lifted him into a loftier, airier social sphere than that of Chichester Gardens, where his visits became somewhat of a fearful joy, so exalted a personage did he seem in the admiring eyes of his kinsfolk.

The subject of conversation meanwhile continued to engross the speakers, and many were the conjectures hazarded as to the changes which would result from the presence of the stranger within their gates, until Miss Landon, a ladylike girl, neither fair nor dark, tall nor short, plump nor thin, with eyes rather light for her hair and complexion, and a small, neat mouth, which bespoke nothing particular, rose, and declaring herself quite



tired of the topic, wished her mother and brother good-night.

Mrs. Landon soon followed her, and Charlie, selecting a novel from several bearing the mark of Mudie, retired to enjoy a read and a smoke before he slept.

The coming change in the hitherto very unalterable conditions of the Landon family was certainly important.

A rich old maiden lady, distantly related to Mr. Landon's elder and half-brother, Major Nugent, had departed this life some little time before the opening of my story, and bequeathed all her property to the impecunious daughter of the deceased Major.

Her last will and testament had been a very unpleasant surprise to Mr. Landon. He had been Miss Sarah Jane Witham's legal adviser for many years, and had drawn up many wills for his variable client in the course of them; sometimes one of his sons, sometimes his daughter, were put down for handsome bequests, while he himself was always appointed executor. When at last the end came, to his amazement a totally different will was found, by which, after a few trifling legacies to her old servants, and for the maintenance of a parrot, everything was changed, and the daughter of the testatrix's old friend, Major Nugent, was named residuary legatee. The document was very short and clear, and had been drawn up by a strange solicitor, a young, insignificant man, who was beginning to creep into business.

Here again Mr. Landon was appointed executor. At the first shock he was inclined to refuse to act, but reflection showed him that it would be too open a manifestation of disappointment. He therefore determined to accept the office, and, as no guardian had been appointed, Andrée Nugent was made a ward in Chancery, and directed to reside with her uncle until she came of age.

The minor was by no means satisfied with this decision. In truth she was personally a complete stranger to her uncle and his family, of whom her father's opinion was anything but flattering. She had been accustomed to hear Mr. Landon described as a low-minded curmudgeon, who would sweep hell for sixpence, or take a penny out of a blind man's hat—a strange construction to put on the conduct of a hard but strictly honest professional man. But oil and vinegar are not more opposite in nature than were the half-brothers.

The mother of both was left early a widow with a son still in his childhood; after a couple of struggling years she gladly married Landon's father, an elderly solicitor. He managed to procure a cadetship for his stepson, who was for some time a promising officer, but gambling, horse-racing, and too much brandy-pawnee, made India rather too hot for him. He retired in indifferent health, and went to recruit and economize in France; there he married a bright, attractive French girl, of good but impoverished family, who pinched and worked for him, and kept him straight, through the best and happiest years of his life.

He loved her fondly and trusted her completely, but he was essentially unlucky, and death was his bitterest foe when he snatched away the wife who was his dearest, wisest comrade, leaving him a little daughter just old enough to miss her sweet mother cruelly.

Nugent was a man who could "follow" finely, but could not stand alone. Solitary evenings drove him from home. His narrow means forbade a respectable club, and chance acquaintances at second-rate restaurants are not conducive to moral stamina. One stay, however, was left him. A sense of duty to his dead wife, as well as to his *living daughter*, kept him from drinking. Play, how-

ever, he could not resist; and though he never risked high stakes, his money affairs got into sad disorder, and his little girl grew accustomed to strange fluctuations in the family finances.

In the first times of trouble Nugent unhesitatingly applied for help to his half-brother, feeling that in his place he (Nugent) would have willingly given it; but after the first grudgingly granted application Mr. Landon never again yielded, and Nugent's later letters were not even acknowledged; hence the low opinion entertained by him of the highly respectable solicitor who had inherited his father's share in the firm mentioned at the outset.

When Andrée, who bore her mother's name, was little more than fifteen, a sudden chill, which he was ill-fitted to resist, carried off Major Nugent, leaving his daughter penniless and desolate. What would become of her none can tell (for the Major's friends were not exactly calculated to guide and guard a young girl), had not an extremely belligerent elder sister of her mother's, who had generally been more or less at war with Nugent, and had had herself a tolerably hard struggle for existence, taken compassion on the orphan and opened her doors to her.

These doors were by no means gates of Paradise. Within were short commons, scanty furniture, frequent wrangling, and often deferred payments, for Madame Carrichon kept a *pension au quatrième* for girl art-students. Sometimes it was full to overflowing, sometimes at a very low ebb. It was chiefly used by English and Americans, and Andrée's familiarity with their language was of use. Gradually her capabilities developed, till she became well *worth her food* and what cast-off clothes her aunt could *spare her*. Madame Carrichon's terms were extremely

moderate, and to make even a small margin of profit required the closest cheeseparing.

Here Andrée passed four miserable years, not altogether without gleams of relief, for some of the girls were kind and sympathetic. It is wonderful how generous and helpful a poverty-stricken Bohemian community often are to each other.

Andrée had loved her father passionately. These "good-for-naughts"—who are no one's enemy but their own—generally are lovable, and to his daughter Nugent seemed the noblest, the most unfortunate of men.

Her aunt had a very different opinion of the defunct, and once expressed it to Andrée with brutal frankness, causing such an agony of grief and fury as startled the world-hardened woman, and reminded her of—what indeed a Frenchwoman seldom forgets—the sacredness of a parent in a child's mind. She never again offended on this score.

To this poor young slavey came Mr. Landon with the astounding news that she was rich, and comparatively free—rich beyond what her imagination could depict; yet the news was not to her "tidings of great joy." First, there was the bitter feeling that fortune had sent her favours too late to benefit the one creature she had loved. Secondly, that for the present she was delivered into the hand of an enemy she hated and despised. She had sense enough, however, to see that for the present she must submit, and therefore made up her mind to endure the period that must elapse before her majority would give her freedom.

For the rest, she was almost painfully bewildered by the sudden, startling change, and dazed by Madame Carrichon's eager chatter, and terrible suggestions of evil motives and diabolical intentions which she unhesitatingly

attributed to the immaculate Mr. Landon. These did not appall Andrée, who, though by no means brilliant intellectually, had a fair share of common sense, and a profound conviction of her own ignorance on many subjects.

Also she did feel it was hard and unjust that she should be obliged to leave Madame Carrichon directly her presence might be beneficial to the woman who had sheltered her when no other shelter was available. She had ventured to explain her desire that the outlay to which she had put Madame Carrichon should be refunded to the cold, sedate man, whose presence somewhat oppressed her, and he had promised to take the matter into consideration, which was not at all satisfactory to Madame Carrichon, who firmly believed that the *rusé* Englishman never intended to give her a farthing.

In fact, these first days of heiress-ship were rather wretched. Fortunately the sum placed in her hands by her guardian was sufficient to leave a considerable balance, after providing the modest outfit which Andrée thought so handsome and abundant; and this money she gladly bestowed on her aunt, with the sincere promise of making up in future for present shortcomings. Ultimately she was not sorry to leave the perpetual complaining and conjecturing behind her, and plunge into the unknown represented by her uncle's home and family, which must be, Andrée thought, as severe and chilly as himself.

If Andrée looked forward with dismay to the life that awaited her, Mrs. Landon and her daughter were scarcely less oppressed by the anticipation of her coming. The account given by Mr. Landon of his niece, though brief and slight, conveyed the impression of an obstinate and *rather uncouth* personage. That she had had a French *mother—who, no doubt, was some low person—scored*

eavily against her, and they almost prayed that she might not have inherited any vice which might bring disgrace on the spotless reputation of the family. To be sure the possession of ample means was at once a shield and spear—people are so indulgent even to erring women who possess three or four thousand a year!

By the time the day of their new inmate's arrival came, both mother and daughter had worked themselves into what in more excitable persons would have been a nervous crisis. Charlie, too, was a sort of jovial Job's comforter, if such a contradictory expression may be used. He hoped that "Andrew" would turn out a "good fellow." He trusted she spoke English, and didn't cry "Oh! my God!" oftener than once in every ten minutes. Perhaps she might teach the cook how to make an omelette; that would be a distinct gain. Heaven grant she might eat in a civilized manner! "When is Richard coming to dinner?" he added; "I shall be amused to see their first meeting."

"Why, Richard was from the first most anxious that your father should offer Miss Nugent a home in our house," said Mrs. Landon; "and indeed it is very generous of him, for of course Miss Witham's will was rather a disappointment."

"What!" cried Charlie, in mock amazement. "Is my father giving her free quarters?"

"Nonsense, Charlie; why should he, when she can well afford to pay. But it is time to prepare for dinner, your father was to meet Miss Nugent at Charing Cross at 8.30, and they will be here in half an hour I imagine. Come, Emily."

The important moment was at hand.

Mrs. Landon and her daughter had scarcely returned to the drawing-room when a luggage-laden cab drew up

at the door, and in a few minutes Mr. Landon ushered in a young lady in black.

"I have brought you a relative whom you will, I am sure, make as much at home and as comfortable as possible," he said, more graciously than he had yet spoken.

"I shall certainly try," returned Mrs. Landon, somewhat touched by the sight of the orphan who was thus plunged among utter strangers, and coming forward to shake hands with her, while Emily followed and murmured that she was pleased to make her acquaintance. Both looked with interest and curiosity at their new inmate.

She was about middle height and decidedly plain; a small bonnet with a black net veil sat neatly over her somewhat rough dark hair, and beneath was a face, not delicately or transparently pale, rather thickly white; black strongly-marked eyebrows, eyes of very deep brown, both brow and eyes well shaped; the lower part of the face square and firm; a wide, close-shut mouth, a rather massive chin; she was high-shouldered and broad, even through the disguise of a well-cut travelling cloak, yet not common looking, but very grave, with almost an expression of solemnity.

As she listened to her hostess's civil words, a smile relaxed her lips—a pleasant smile, though scarcely a pretty one, showing fine white teeth.

"Thank you, you are very kind," she said. Mrs. Landon was struck with her voice; it was soft and sweet, and had just a touch of foreign accent which gave it distinction.

"Had you a comfortable journey?" continued Mrs. Landon.

"Yes, I had, but the sea was rough, and my compan-

ion, Miss Analy, suffered a good deal; I am so sorry she is obliged to pass the night alone here, I should have liked to stay with her, but Mr. Landon would not allow me."

"No, of course not; that would not do. Now you would like to go to your room; dinner will soon be ready; and let me introduce my son, my second son, Charles."

Miss Nugent made a slight, quickly-checked movement, as though she would have put out her hand, but the young man contented himself with a low bow, observing to himself that their French cousin was on the whole better than he expected. Then Mrs. Landon conducted her guest upstairs to the best spare bedroom, which looked upon the well-kept pleasure ground before mentioned. Every step in her progress, from the moment she touched English soil, had been a discovery to Andrée, who was naturally observant, and this first sight of a typical English interior was never to be forgotten. Accustomed as she had been to the ruggedness of French Bohemian life, the dainty cleanliness, the completeness of everything, struck her almost with awe. Her room, though of moderate size, was in her eyes palatial. The carpet harmonized delightfully with the pretty crêtonne curtains of the windows and draperies of the bed. The snowy counterpane and gaily embroidered night-gown bag, the well-appointed writing-table and easy chair at the foot of the bedstead, the large wardrobe with looking-glass doors, the highly-polished chest of drawers, the marble washstand, the duchesse dressing-table with its fixed glass and multitude of little drawers, the ornaments on the mantelpiece and overmantel, the store of towels, the ladylike young woman occupied in unstrapping her trunk, —all *seemed to Andrée fit for a princess*. Was all this



comfort and elegance an earnest of her future life? Why, why had it all come too late!

"I hope you have everything you want," said Mrs. Landon, "if not, pray ring, and Jenkins," nodding to the ladylike young woman, "will attend to you; she is quite handy, and always dresses my daughter. If you will give her your keys she will unpack your things and put them away. If you have not room enough we must make a place for another wardrobe at the other side of the window."

"Oh, there is abundant room," said Andrée, "and I do not like to trouble anyone to unpack for me."

"It is no trouble, it is her business," returned Mrs. Landon quietly. "Now I shall leave you to dress," and she left the room. Almost mechanically Andrée gave her keys to Jenkins, who, with a deferential air, took off the visitor's cloak, and stood waiting to receive her bonnet; suggested unbuttoning her boots, an offer which was rejected, and then rapidly and deftly took out and spread on the bed the contents of a huge box.

"What will you please to wear, Miss?" asked Jenkins. Andrée hesitated—only for a moment—for surely the house, the elegant toilettes of her hostess, demanded that she should don her very best go-to-meeting garment of black silk grenadine made over silk, and adorned with jet. It cost, Andrée thought, a fabulous sum, still she had better put it on. Probably she might now be able to afford several robes of equal cost, only nothing ought to tempt her into extravagance after the cruel poverty she had endured. How she wished the nice-looking young woman would go away! Never, since her early childish days, had she had anyone to dress her. "Pray do not wait," she summoned courage to say at last; "I do not *want any assistance.*"

"Very well, Miss; if you should require me I shall be close at hand; I can put away your things while you are at dinner."

Andrée completed her toilette without assistance, and was even beginning to place her clothes in the drawers, when the sound of a gong vibrated through the air; a knock on the door immediately followed, and Jenkins appeared, saying, "If you please, Miss, dinner is on the table;" and Andrée hastily, though reluctantly, abandoned her belongings to the care of Jenkins, and went downstairs. She was not shy, though far from assured; moreover, her deep-rooted dislike and distrust of Mr. Landon gave her a curious defiant composure in her intercourse with him. He took little heed of women in general, having the usual unconscious contempt for them common among Englishmen.

When she entered the drawing-room she found the party augmented by a gentleman—a tall, well set-up man of, perhaps, thirty or more, with sandy hair and moustaches and light grey rather penetrating eyes; he was somewhat like Mrs. Landon, certainly a good-looking man, and in very accurate evening dress. This individual was hastily introduced as "My eldest son" by Mr. Landon, who immediately offered his arm to Andrée, and they crossed the hall to the dining-room, for the houses in Chichester Gardens, among many other advantages, had their sitting-rooms on the ground floor.

Here, too, everything was formidably superior in Andrée's eyes,—snowy cloth, glittering glass and silver, the lower-decorated table, and the solemnity, the rigid activity, if such a contradictory phrase be admissible, of the two servants who waited; the big sideboard with a sort of ornamental dresser, all loaded with appliances for the table, the *thick Persian carpet*,—nothing escaped her

notice. Then the food looked very nice, but she found it rather tasteless after the often scanty dishes cooked by her French aunt, where gravy, vegetables, and hunches of bread made up for the paucity of meat.

Mr. Landon "made conversation" for her with much politeness, and Andrée contrived to drop every subject he started with the fewest possible words. The others spoke together at intervals in a low tone. Once or twice Andrée caught the eyes of Richard Landon fixed on her with a searching glance, but, though painfully conscious of the difference between the present and the past, between the hard, sordid life to which she had been accustomed, and the moneyed ease which had lifted these kinsfolk of hers, who were so little kin, above all the degradation of physical needs, and put so wide a gulf between them, she kept an air of self-contained composure. What were they to her? she might be compelled for a short time, less than two years, to consort with them, but into her real life they should never enter.

"Pray, is this your first visit to England?" asked Richard Landon, suddenly addressing her.

"I may say it is. I believe I was here as a baby, but I have no recollection of that time." She met his eyes with a steady, impenetrable look.

"It is just the time to receive a good impression, which I hope England and the English will make upon you."

"I have always wished to come to England; hitherto I have loved it because it is my father's country."

"And I trust it will prove more lovable on nearer acquaintance."

"I hope so," returned Andrée, in not a very hopeful tone.

"My mother must put you through a severe course of lionizing, Miss Nugent. I shall try and get you places

the Ladies' Gallery; you would like to hear a debate?"

"Thank you very much." Her face was quite unaltered, nor did she commit herself to any expression of desire to hear the words of wisdom which fall from the lips of our law-makers. There was a little more desultory talk, chiefly sustained by Mr. Landon and his eldest son, who addressed a remark from time to time to his newly-discovered cousin, and then the ladies retired.

"Well, sir," said Richard Landon to his father, as he replenished his glass with claret, "I can't say that there is much of the sparkling Parisian about our French cousin."

"No; she is very plain, and no doubt oppressed by a sense of the difference between us and herself. This makes her silent and shy."

"Silent, yes; shy, I am not so sure. There is a doggedness about her that may give you trouble, sir. Yes, she is plain, both in figure and face; but somehow she looks like a gentlewoman. Who was her father?"

"Oh, my half-brother gave himself great airs on the score of high descent; and if gambling, drinking, and general recklessness are aristocratic qualities, why Major Nugent was certainly an aristocrat. Fortunately for his daughter he is not here to squander her property."

"It was an extraordinary will for Miss Witham to make," said Richard, pulling his moustaches meditatively.

"A very disappointing one," chimed in Charlie with candour. "Who could have suggested that girl to her?"

"There is some story of an old attachment on the part of the late Miss Witham to Major Nugent, and one of her many wills was in his favour, but on hearing of his marriage she destroyed it. It was curious that the idea should recur to her at the last, for she only survived the execu-

tion of her will about ten days. As she concealed it from me I am rather surprised she did not select another executor."

"It was a high compliment to your integrity," returned his son. "But you are right; it is lucky that the fascinating Major did not survive to share his daughter's prosperity. Shall we join my mother?" And while he was speaking thus Andrée, who had asked leave to retire, sat with her elbows on the writing-table in her room, her face covered with her hands, while tears forced themselves through her fingers. Her nerves were unhinged by fatigue and the sense of isolation, which overpowered her, while the past, its poverty and struggle and endless difficulty, sustained and beautified by affection and sympathy, came out of memory's caverns and unrolled itself vividly before her. "If he had only lived to have a little pleasure before he went hence," she sobbed—"if he had only lived!"

## CHAPTER II.

### LADY SARAH TEMPLE.

THE Landon household was extremely regular and y in their habits, and in a usual way lights, in the ng-rooms at least, were generally extinguished at ten. en therefore Richard Landon left the paternal man- i he was still in excellent time for Lady Sarah Temple's t Home"; he therefore hailed a hansom, and directed driver to South Audley Street, meditating as he drove ng on the mutability of human affairs.

If the late Miss Witham had departed this life before destruction of her last will but one, he would most bably be in possession of her very handsome fortune, encumbered by any irksome matrimonial fetters which must now accept if he intended to recapture the prop- y which had escaped him. On the whole it was better t it should have fallen to the lot of a possible wife than o his brother's or sister's hands, when it would have n lost to him for ever. But could he not do better n ally himself with such an obscure nobody, who had hing but money to recommend her? Might he not l a partner who had good connections as well as cash? would not be in a hurry; so far he had been success- , but his success had brought little or no grist to his ll. To be a successful barrister required an amount of ient plodding and waiting that seemed exceedingly bidding to *Richard Landon*, who loved his ease and

his own special pleasures very dearly; yet he knew that for anything of a solid reputation he must pose as a efficient lawyer. Though Thomas Landon had a handsome income, and had amassed a respectable amount of money, Richard knew it would only provide what he considered a modest competence for his survivors, and Richard wanted more than this. He was now nearly thirty-one, and he felt he had somewhat wasted his early youth. It was time he distinguished himself in some way.

Lady Sarah Temple's "At Homes" were decided popular gatherings, and a number of carriages were driving up and driving off when Richard Landon alighted and ascended to the reception room. The hostess did not station herself at the head of the stairs on these informal occasions, and Richard sought her in the larger of her two drawing-rooms.

Lady Sarah Temple in her war-paint presented rather a formidable appearance. She had been a beauty of the dark, richly-coloured order, and clung to the traditions of her youth with grim tenacity. Vanity in her rose to the dignity of a passion. She was too active and energetic a woman to grow stout, and therefore flattered herself that her figure was still youthful. Rouged cheeks, darkened eyelashes and eyebrows, dyed hair and abundant pearl powder made up a ferocious copy of her early portraits. She was one of those occasional instances where reckless self-will, unhesitating self-indulgence, and a mixture of generosity with glaring injustice seemed to bring no retribution.

Lady Sarah had married for love, and driven her husband to despair and error. She had a son whom she adored and tormented; perhaps the only blow she ever felt was his death (he was killed when hunting). A daughter was also born to her, who fared somewhat better because of her mother's indifference, and who married

early. Lady Sarah's overbearing disposition frequently betrayed her into legal difficulties, and kept her in constant communication with her solicitors, and of the partners in the firm of Redman, Landon, and Kellett, she appropriated Mr. Landon. At the outset of his career Richard had entered his father's office, and one day was sent with some important papers to be delivered into her ladyship's hand. She saw, or fancied she saw, a strong resemblance to her lamented son, and took a great fancy to him. His manners were good; he did his best to win her favour by adopting a tone of respectful but irrepressible admiration, and by her advice persuaded his father to let him study for the Bar.

During this explanation Richard Landon had been slowly penetrating to the presence of his hostess, whom he found talking and laughing with a well-known Q. C. Lady Sarah adored talent in a patronizing way.

"Ah, you are there at last!" she said, as she perceived her favourite. "You ought to have been earlier. Your fair *protégée* has been wandering about like a lost soul in a wilderness of strangers, no doubt wishing herself back in the Arcadian regions of Bayswater. I sent her to get some tea with old General Brown. I daresay you will find her near the buffet. She is, or rather would be, a pretty woman if she knew how to dress herself. Don't go away without seeing me again." She smiled, showing a magnificent array of teeth, and gave the young man an affable nod, turning to resume the conversation his approach had interrupted.

The fair *protégée* for whom Richard went in search was the wife of Mr. Kellett, the junior partner in Mr. Landon's firm: a lady of aspiring tastes, who had long petitioned for an invitation to one of Lady Sarah's Thursdays, and at last succeeded in persuading her friend and



ally to ask for one, very reluctantly, for Richard well knew that one of his merits in Lady Sarah's eyes was that he never troubled her with any of his people.

He had not gone far when he recognized Mrs. Kellett returning from the tea-room with a very discomfited expression of countenance, and leaning on the arm of a stout, elderly, soldierly-looking man with a red face, who was very well known in society, chiefly owing to his genius for whist. Mrs. Kellett was small, delicately fair, and childish-looking, with quantities of light hair, and appealing blue eyes; she had a bright colour and a pretty figure, but she had attired herself in rose-colour, with wide white lace flounces, and a quantity of the same lace overloading her shoulders, giving them a squareness they did not really possess.

"I thought you did not intend to come," she exclaimed poutingly; "you might have known I should feel lost without you here."

"I did intend to be here earlier," returned Landon apologetically; "but I will explain—come into the conservatory." Here General Brown bowed himself off, not sorry to be rid of the sulky little woman from whom he could hardly extract a word. She gladly took Landon's arm, and accompanied him to the conservatory, into which the tea-room opened.

"I was on duty at home," he began, when he found a comfortable seat for himself and his companion. "You see, our French cousin arrived this afternoon, and I felt bound to do the civil; besides, I wanted to have a look at the heiress, our supplanter, so I dined at home, and was late—or, rather, are not you early?"

"I don't know. I was horribly disappointed when I had your telegram saying you could not escort me, but I *made sure* you would meet me at the door. I could have

ried with vexation when I was obliged to go up to that terrible old woman all alone."

"You could never dream of disfiguring those charming eyes with tears?" said Landon, looking into them admiringly. "And pray do not apply such blasphemous expressions, even in thought, to our fascinating hostess. Why, in matters concerning herself she almost possesses powers of divination, and she is capable of executing awful vengeance."

"Oh, she could not hear, Dick," looking round with an alarmed expression. Pretty Mrs. Kellett was the only creature who ever called Richard Landon "Dick." "I am sure you deserve my vengeance for deserting me merely to look at this rich cousin of yours. What is she like? Full of French airs and graces, I suppose?"

Landon shook his head.

"She is quite innocent of airs, and incapable of graces, —Nature forbids them. She is a dark, silent, solid sort of woman, but not without intelligence, I fancy."

"Poor soul! she will just be married for her money, and have a wretched life of it," said Mrs. Kellett compassionately.

"It all comes pretty much to the same in the end," he returned. "Love or money, whatever the attraction, it fades away in time. Money will last longest, especially as my father will see that our relative's cash shall be strictly centred on herself. Believe me, my sweet friend, the only links which do not snap, or, at least, that last the longest, are those that are hidden and elastic."

"Perhaps so," said Mrs. Kellett, with a quick, deep sigh; then, after a pause, she added, "How do you like my dress?" Landon turned and looked at her with an air of profound consideration.

"*Truth compels me to say that it does not do you jus-*

tice," he said gravely. "You ought to study art, my dear Nellie; the colour of this garment kills your complexion. You should wear white, or black, or lilac—very pale lilac—or——Why don't you employ a first-rate artiste?"

"But I do," with a sound as of tears in her voice; "at all events her charges are first-rate. I just tremble to think what Mr. Kellett will say when the bill for this gown comes in. I had it on purpose for this party, and I am sure I don't enjoy it a bit."

"Why did you want to come?" asked Landon, with a cruel smile; "you know no one, and——"

"I want to begin to know people who are somebodies," she returned, "and you ought to help me. Do you know this dress cost twenty pounds, and the flounces are my own? They were on my wedding dress. Mr. Kellett gave them to me."

"He has no right to quarrel with you for so moderate an outlay. He is miserably stingy. Tell him my sister Emily's ball dresses never cost less than twenty-five pounds."

"No—really?"

"You can say her brother told you so. Come, my dear little woman, you must see the fun of the fair. I will show you the lions, and remind Lady Sarah of your existence before you go."

"I shall enjoy that," cried Mrs. Kellett, brightening up, as she rose and took the arm he offered.

For a considerable time Landon devoted himself to his pretty friend, pointing out the remarkable people, and even introducing some of the men to her. The women who interested her most were one or two well-known actresses, and her surprise at meeting them in what she considered such "swell" society was great. "Dear me, Dick! *I thought Miss H—— was rather queer in her conduct.*"

"Oh, mere ill-natured gossip; she is clever and successful, and Lady Sarah adores success. Would you like to know Miss H——?"

"Yes, I should—no, perhaps I had better not, it might be awkward if she came to call on me."

"Don't alarm yourself, there are very few people *she* calls upon."

"Who is that dark lady with the splendid diamonds, and oh! such a dress?"

"Lady—I mean the Marchioness of Taplow. I fancy, from her get up, she must have been dining at the Duke of Glamorgan's. There was a big dinner there to the Prince and Princess to-day."

"Oh!" Mrs. Kellett could say no more.

"Do you know it is getting late?" resumed Landon; "and I have some papers to look over before I sleep. Let us say good-night now, Lady Sarah is free for the moment," and he led her towards the lady of the house.

"Oh, you are going, are you? Well, I believe it is getting rather late, and I fear you have a long way to drive," said the hostess.

"Not very far; just across the park. I am sure I have to thank you for a delightful evening," said Mrs. Kellett, hesitating and blushing.

"You are very good," said Lady Sarah briefly. "You will see Mrs. Kellett to her carriage and come back to me." This to Landon in a tone of command.

"So sorry I cannot see you safe home," he remarked as he closed the carriage door; "I quite hoped to do so, but—it is not possible; I'll send you a line to-morrow." Mrs. Kellett's reply was lost in the roll of her "chariot wheels" as it drove off.

The rooms were thinning rapidly when Landon returned to *them*, and he stood a while exchanging last

words with many acquaintances till—he found himself alone with Lady Sarah.

“Come,” she said, “I am very nearly dead with fatigue. I shall have some supper in my own special den, which, if you choose, you may share.”

“A thousand thanks! I have not had a chance of speaking with you for a week.”

“A long time to be deprived of an old woman’s society!”

“A very long time to be deprived of ‘the wit and wisdom’ of Lady Sarah Temple,” rejoined Landon with a bow.

“Well turned. Give me your arm, flatterer. My dear Landon, I begin to hope you will yet do me some credit.”

“Such is my desire, most gracious social godmother.”

The little supper was exceedingly dainty, and the wine admirable. It was all placed on the table, and Lady Sarah dismissed the servants with a brief word, “I shall ring if I want you.”

“Try some of the lobster cream,” she continued, addressing her guest; “it is good. For my part I like to eat; in fact, at my age, there are generally but two vices left, gluttony and avarice. Thank heaven I can still be amused by good talk, but amusement becomes more and more a difficulty. Take some wine, Richard; that Steinberger cabinet isn’t bad. You are a moderate man, I know; stick to moderation, it is a tower of strength. I wish I had always been moderate! I feel too much, and feeling has cost me a good deal. By the way, have you settled with that wretched groom who threatened to bring an action against me for board wages?”

“Yes, Lady Sarah; and, excuse me, I wish you would *allow your butler or secretary* to settle with your servants

of this class, you only singe your fingers when you meddle with them."

"Well, perhaps so. In this case the man contradicted me insolently; if I had had my dog-whip I should certainly have flogged him."

"How unfortunate for the society papers that you had not," said Landon, smiling; "imagine the paragraphs you would have provided for them."

"Yes, you are right. I suppose the affair is at an end?"

"Quite finished, Lady Sarah."

She slowly filled her glass, sipped it, and resumed.

"What have you been doing? Any briefs?"

"Yes, two, both from the firm; at least my name will appear with those of a couple of big wigs. It is slow work."

"Hideously slow. You must do something, my dear boy."

"I feel that, and I have sketched out a pamphlet on 'The Future of our Food Supply.' I think I can make it readable, and by skimming a few dozen articles and papers on that and cognate subjects I may evolve something original, or what will sound original."

"That seems promising. One sure means of getting on is, I am convinced, to keep oneself perpetually before the eyes of the world. And how are matters at home?"

"As usual. Our interloping kinswoman has arrived."

"Indeed! Now in the simple, honest times of old, you and your father would have forged a forty-fifth will for that testamentary old woman (she made dozens, didn't she?); or married the legatee straight off (*you* would, I mean); or forced her to make her will in your favour as soon as she was *twenty-one*, and administered a pill, or

something of that kind. Now you will be reduced to marry her *if* she chooses."

"I do not exactly see myself marrying her, Lady Sarah!"

"Well, there is your brother; he might do. What is she like?" Landon described her.

"Why, my dear Richard, she must be a fright."

"No, Lady Sarah; she is plain, but not a fright. Still, I doubt that she would be a good wife for me. She is so reserved, so desperately quiet, that I fancy she would be socially of no use at all."

"Ah, well, money will not do everything; never did. A bright coquette, who would be good friends with you, and look after your interests by flirting with the right people, would be more valuable than a mere mass of heavy metal."

"No doubt; but I have only been for a few hours in Miss Nugent's presence; I must cultivate her a little more before I pronounce her hopeless."

"Yes, you had better, meanwhile I will be on the lookout for you. I suppose you get on pretty well with women?"

"Only pretty well, I fancy; I don't care enough about them."

"Don't be an imbecile. Women are always of importance; men can't help it. Though I hate those ill-dressed, offensive frights, the strong-minded women, I can't help seeing that the day they win an acknowledged place among thinkers and workers, and cease to be a sort of illegitimate, irresponsible, back-stair influence, we will have a healthier moral life, that is, if morals have any stamina at all, which I doubt."

"My dear Lady Sarah, you astonish me; I did not dream you were so revolutionary."

"Oh, I can be very reflective and profound occasionally, when the world, the flesh, and the devil are asleep for the moment. I get out of some window on to what those queer people, the Theosophists, call the 'psychic plane' (with an *e*, you know), and feel amazed at my own enlightenment, but it does not last long. The infernal trio soon drag me back again. Now I suspect you have been and are more foolish than I imagined."

"Why?" asked Landon, feeling a little uneasy under the fierce, hawk-like eyes of his patroness.

"Why did you worry me for an invitation, and why did you bring that little Mrs. Kellett here?"

"Oh, she has always been an ally of my sister's—and—she wanted to come."

"That is no reason why she should have her wish. Having brought her here you could not desert her, and it did you no good to be seen the whole evening hanging about a second-rate woman of that kind. I don't want to pry into your relations; they are nothing to me. If you must have an affair on hand—and it is not a bad sort of advertisement—be sure you place your temporary affections on some *very* distinguished, well-known woman; you lose yourself utterly by devotion to a nobody; you are not yet important enough to raise her, but she has ample power to pull you down whatever you sacrifice. Break with that pretty little white mouse Mrs. Kellett, that is, if there is anything to break."

Landon laughed: "Is it very likely that any very distinguished, well-known woman, will look at such an insignificant nobody as myself?"

"Nothing venture, nothing have, my dear boy. Utter devotion, the more hopeless the better, and unceasing perseverance, will move mountains of feminine distinction and renown. Try, try, try again. Meantime the Nugent



cousin may be kept in reserve—Nugent, it's a good name. What are her people?"

"I think they are a Lincolnshire family."

"Yes, that's right. I should rather like to see her; I am organizing a big ball, and shall ask your people, she had better come too. Now, my dear boy, I am tired; you must go. Dine with me the day after to-morrow; I have had a refusal and can just niche you in. Mr. and Mrs. Herries are coming; she is quite charming; make yourself agreeable to her, and think of what I have said."

When Landon left his friend and counsellor he did think very seriously, and firmly resolved to follow her advice; but it was not easy to do so, nor was he provided with an ally in his inner self. Mrs. Kellett was of the sort of clinging, impulsive, unreasonable women whose very existence is a pleasant flattery to men, especially hard men like Richard Landon. They excite the same class of affection which dogs and cats and horses attract, chiefly because they are incapable of contradiction or resistance. It may be remarked that many men, and women too, who can be cruel enough to their fellow-creatures, are quite tender to their four-footed companions. Robespierre was most loving to his pets.

Landon still enjoyed his flirtation with Mrs. Kellett,—enjoyed teasing and soothing her, and feeling his power over her. He could not give all this up just yet, though the first breath of chilly foreboding had suggested that the time might come when she would become somewhat of a bore. Of course he fancied the game was in his own hands,—that he could cry "Halt" when he chose.

## CHAPTER III.

### AFFAIRS.

THE sense of strangeness was slow to pass away from Andrée. The mere fact of hearing nothing but English spoken, though she understood it perfectly, reminded her perpetually that she had left the only semblance of home she had ever known for ever. The order and regularity of the Landon abode excited her admiration, for disorder was hateful to her, but the absence of work, or the necessity for it, oppressed her with a feeling of hopeless dullness, accustomed as she had been to a rush of eager, busy girls to finish, and often to prepare their morning *café au lait* and *petit pain*, in order to reach the studio or the class in good time; to the rapid, scrambling preparation of *déjeuner* for those who came in for it; the hundred and one things—mending, making, dusting, cleaning—to be got through before seven o'clock dinner,—the day in Chichester Gardens seemed terribly empty and uninteresting. From the time that the well-spread breakfast-table was swiftly and noiselessly cleared while Mrs. Landon read the paper her husband had previously skimmed, to luncheon-time, about four hours after, there was literally nothing to do. Mrs. Landon certainly disappeared downstairs for a while, and afterwards wrote in a big book which lay with others on her special writing-table in a dull little room called the study. Miss Landon sometimes *arranged* or *re-arranged* the flowers, or not un-

frequently left them to Jenkins; sometimes she wrote notes and letters, practised exercises and classical compositions on the piano, and occasionally went to visit the poor in the district allotted to her, an employment which she greatly disliked. But nothing of all this was in the least obligatory; it was mere play.

Then in the afternoon there were visits to pay and shopping to do, and so the slowly revolving hours brought them round to dinner again and the evening, with a little music, a little talk, a little loitering in the pleasure-grounds. This routine was certainly varied by games of tennis with some of their neighbours, or, seeing that Andrée enjoyed it more than anything else, an early walk in Kensington Gardens, which were very near.

The consciousness of absolute vacancy grew more and more exhausting, and at last Andrée, who from the first was more attracted to Mrs. Landon than to any other member of the family, made an effort to break through her reserve and ask counsel from the mistress of the house.

"I am very tired of being idle, Mrs. Landon," she said, one warm afternoon, as they sat together after luncheon, for Emily had gone to spend the day with Mrs. Kellett.

"Are you? I do not think you are especially idle, my dear."

"I have really nothing to do, and I am very ignorant; though I do not suppose I shall ever play well, like your daughter, I should like to study music,—to take lessons, I mean."

"Yes, it would be very nice for you. I am glad you are anxious to improve yourself; we must get you a good *master*. I suppose you have learned?"

"Well, yes, I have had some hints, and when it was

free I used to play a little on my aunt's piano, but I have had very few opportunities."

"I will go and see Madame Rakoffski this afternoon, she has excellent classes; Herr B——, Emily's master, would not, I think, take a beginner."

"Thank you. May I come with you?"

"Certainly, of course; I intended you should. I am glad to see you take an interest in something, for it has grieved me to see you so silent and depressed. I am sure Emily——"

"She is very kind and friendly to me, Mrs. Landon," interrupted Andrée quickly; "but it is difficult for us both: for her, because I am a stranger suddenly thrust upon her; for me, because I am plunged into a life so new, so strange to me, and because I almost hate the money which has come too late to be of any use to the only creature I ever truly, deeply loved."

"Who?" asked Mrs. Landon, startled by her earnestness. The late Major Nugent being so utterly out of the running, for such stakes as love, tenderness, or respect, according to the impression she had received of him, that for the moment she could not realize that he might be a very perfect being in his daughter's eyes.

"My father," said Andrée, not noticing her surprise. "Life was so hard to him. He was too generous and high-minded to battle with cruel, false people. If he could only have known that I should be well off, that would have given him comfort at the last. Oh! I can never forget his eyes; the pain in them haunts me still. Did you never know my father, Mrs. Landon?"

"Yes,—that is, I have seen him twice," returned Mrs. Landon, touched by the loving memory which spoke, in Andrée's voice, and appealed to her own feelings as a parent. "*When Major Nugent returned from India he*

dined with us before going on to France. He was very agreeable, and had charming manners; but I cannot say I *knew* him."

"Ah! if you had you would have loved him," said Andrée, with a long sigh. Then with an effort she said in a different voice, "Forgive me for troubling you; I do not intend to speak of these things, and you cannot understand."

"Yes, Andrée, I do, and respect your affection for your father. But, my dear child, you must not repine; your Heavenly Father had some wise purpose in his dealings, and is always merciful and loving."

"So I have been told before; but it all seems very contradictory to me."

"My dear child!" exclaimed Mrs. Landon, aghast.

"I ought not to trouble you, I know," interrupted Andrée quickly, and in a tone of decision, showing she was determined to change the subject. She asked, "But these music lessons—are they very costly?"

"Not more than you can afford, Andrée," said Mrs. Landon with a slight smile, partly at the resolute turn she had given to the conversation, partly at her evidently habitual fear of expense.

"I would not encourage you in any extravagance, but you can afford yourself many things with which you ought to be provided. I do not wish to intrude my advice upon you, but your wardrobe requires large additions, and now you have grown a little more accustomed to us I feel I may venture to make suggestions."

"Thank you, Mrs. Landon; I am sure your advice must be good." Whereupon they plunged into the congenial topic of dress, and Andrée was amazed to find how much she still lacked after what she considered her extensive purchases.

"And you are sure I may buy all these?" she exclaimed at last; "but I suppose you know all about my *irs.*"

"Far from it. Mr. Landon never speaks to me of *iness* matters. I know nothing whatever of your *afs*, except that you have inherited a considerable *for-e.*"

"Well, Mrs. Landon, it is time *I* knew all about it. I *st* ask Mr. Landon, I suppose." Mrs. Landon *mistak-* her abrupt pause, and thinking her husband must be *awe-inspiring* personage to so lately rescued a *waif as* *drée*, asked:

"Should you like me to speak to him, my dear, to *n* the matter?"

"No, thank you; I do not in the least mind speaking him myself of my own affairs."

Mrs. Landon felt rather small for a moment.

"I am sure Mr. Landon will gladly give you every *in-* mation, and very good advice," she said. "And now *y*pose we go and see Madame Rakoffski about your *mu-* lessons. It is not very far; we might drive there and *lk* back. And are you quite sure you would not like to to Mrs. Kellett's dance? I think a little society would you good."

"I am quite sure I should prefer going to bed," *re-* ned Andrée, smiling. ("She has a very pleasant *ile*," thought Mrs. Landon.) "Later I may like to go some parties if you will be so good as to take me; but *w* I am not at all inclined to go."

That afternoon was far the most interesting that *An-* ie had yet spent. She liked the companionship of Mrs. *ndon*. She was gentle and sensible, and Andrée felt *re* was a heart somewhere under her quiet exterior.

Madame Rakoffski was an enthusiastic musician, and

spoke French much more fluently than English. She soon found that Andrée spoke it too as her natural language, and matters were soon arranged on terms satisfactory to both parties.

Richard Landon did not partake of the parental hospitality for more than a week after his first interview with Andrée, and Emily began to wonder why he did not come.

Like most girls of her calibre, the idea of marriage was inseparable in her mind from the social intercourse of men and women. "Here is a man; shall I marry him?" is the half unconscious first thought of many young women. Probably to the majority marriage is the only use to put a man to, and perhaps not the worst. This will no doubt in time be replaced by wider and more varied views when the borders of women's existence are enlarged, and the objects of their life multiplied. Meanwhile, Emily Landon took it for granted that the new-found heiress, like all other good things, would fall to the lot of her eldest brother when, having been duly fitted for her high destiny by association with her accomplished self, it pleased him to put out his august hand and take her. It was a pity, thought the admiring sister, that Andrée should be so plain and reserved; still, her money would atone for much, and the distinction of being Richard's wife was fully a fair exchange for her filthy lucre. Still, he ought not to be too indifferent, or perhaps someone else might step in and forestall him.

It was therefore with satisfaction she observed a note addressed in his handwriting, with several others, lying beside her mother's plate at breakfast the next morning.

"Richard says he will dine with us to-day, if we are disengaged," said Mrs. Landon, looking up from the page *she had just read*. "He has been very busy of late."

Then taking up a large envelope, she opened it: "This is an invitation from Lady Sarah Temple for her ball on the 10th of June. There is a card for you too, Andrée," handing it to her. "This is due, I suppose, to Richard."

"Of course," cried Emily, "and you must really go, Andrée; Lady Sarah's parties are very brilliant, you meet all sorts of remarkable people—or, at any rate, you *see* them. You must have a new dress, Andrée, and so must I."

"I seem to do nothing but buy clothes," remarked Andrée, "and I shall not do so until I have some information or which I am going to ask Mr. Landon—if," addressing him, "you can spare me a quarter of an hour?"

"Certainly," said that gentleman, as if somewhat startled; "but not this morning."

"Whenever it suits you," returned Andrée politely.

"This evening, perhaps;—no, not this evening, Richard is coming, and would like some music."

"All times are the same to me," added Andrée.

"It is rather a pity your new grey dinner dress has not come home; when did Marietta promise it?"

"Not till the end of the week. It will be time enough, I am not going to dine out."

"No—but——" Emily paused; she was puzzled by Andrée's indifference to her appearance, but could not say so;—"and she requires such careful dressing," thought the daughter of the house. Andrée was to take her first lesson in music that morning, and about eleven Emily made her way into the study where Mrs. Landon sat at her usual morning's task.

"Mother, do you know that Andrée has just gone out, quite alone, to Madame Rakoffski's? I told her I did not think you would like it; she just opened her big eyes—her eyes *are* very big—gave a little laugh, and said,



‘Why? I have gone about alone almost ever since I could stand alone,’ and went straight out.”

“I don’t think she meant any incivility,” said Mrs. Landon, thoughtfully; “remember she has been accustomed to a very rugged life, and civilized ways, no doubt, seem foolish and irksome to her. It is only a short way, Emily, and it is not very convenient to send a servant with her every time she wants to go out.”

“I am quite sure Richard would be very much annoyed to hear of her trotting about alone, like any common person; you ought to remonstrate with her, mother, she seems to have taken more to you than to any of us.”

“I shall ask your father to let me engage a maid who can walk about with her,—but she must be in our service; I could make her useful in many ways.”

“It is an excellent idea,” cried Emily; “really four women and a boot boy are hardly enough for this house.”

“Hardly,” echoed her mother; “however, say nothing to your father or Richard. I do not think Andrée Nugent is at all difficult to manage. I like her better than I expected, *but* she requires management, and she has yet to learn the value of appearances.”

“Yet, do you know, she is proud in her way. Mrs. Kellett says she has all the conceit of a parvenu, and that she looks quite common beside me. Indeed, she (Mrs. Kellett) will not believe that Andrée is younger than I am; she says she looks years older.”

“Well, about that there is no doubt,” said Mrs. Landon, with a smile. “Your father had to examine the certificate of her baptism; she was nineteen in November last.”

“Then it will be a year and a half before she is of

age; well, I daresay she will be in a house of her own before that." Mrs. Landon did not reply, and Emily, after a moment's thought, left the room.

. . . . .

It happened that the great Richard presented himself at an unusually early hour, and found his mother alone in the drawing-room. It struck him that she was a remarkably sweet, ladylike looking woman, but that she might sit for the picture of resignation.

"Yet she has had an easy life of it," he thought, as he took her hand and gave her a polite filial kiss. "She has had everything she can want, and that in an increasing ratio,—a good, steady husband, and children that have given her no trouble; of course she knows nothing of my difficulties. What has she to be resigned about? I suppose if the secrets of all lives were suddenly revealed, in a sort of anticipatory judgment day, there is scarcely a quiet white mouse of a woman that would not make us open our eyes considerably!"

Mrs. Landon took up her knitting—she usually occupied herself all the summer in preparing winter socks for her husband—and waited for her son to speak. She stood in some awe of Richard, though he was gentler to her than to anyone else.

"Well, mother," he began, having settled himself in the most comfortable chair he could find, "how have you been getting on all these days—it is nearly or more than a week since I was here?"

"Very tranquilly, Richard. Your father and I dined at the Miller's and at Mrs. Alton's; there was a dance afterwards at Mrs. Alton's, and a large musical evening at Mrs. Playford's; Emily seemed to enjoy both parties. She is going to-morrow with Mrs. Kellett to see 'As You Like It,' at the Lyceum. Andrée Nugent is going too, I

am glad to say, for she seems rather to dislike going out, which is not natural in a young person."

"Ha! But then Miss Nugent is not young, whatever the number of her years may be. Is she an awful bore?"

"No, by no means; I like her better than I expected; she is quiet and sensible, and not in the least troublesome or exacting. It is amazing that she does not seem the least elated by the extraordinary change in her fortunes."

"She's naturally phlegmatic, I suppose."

"I do not know; she is not without feeling; but I do not think it is easy to read her character. I do not fancy Emily finds her a very lively companion. She seems to make very good friends with Charlie, then he is so bright."

"And a good-looking young fellow into the bargain. I suppose he will make the running?"

"I do not quite understand you, Richard. But if you mean——" The entrance of the person talked of cut her sentence short.

"I am rather late, mother, but I'll dress in a jiffy," he exclaimed. "Ah, Richard, how goes it? Saw your name among the swells at Lady Penarven's reception. Why, you must feel like a captive balloon when you deign to pick a bit of dinner in Chichester Gardens;" and Charlie ran off to his room.

Andrée did not make her appearance till the gong sounded for dinner, and all save herself were assembled.

Richard eyed her critically, and with a more personal interest than he had yet felt. She was looking better than when he first saw her. The fatigue of her journey, the emotion of having broken with her old life and surroundings, had passed away; her complexion, though

pale, had a brown, healthy tinge; her eyes were clearer and brighter.

She had only time to exchange a civil greeting with the eldest son before Mr. Landon offered her his arm with his usual icy civility, and they went down to dinner.

That meal was a little more animated than usual, owing to Richard's presence, and his supposed superior information respecting the events occurring in Egypt, as the war there was then in its second and most serious stage. In the conversation on these topics the ladies took little or no part; Emily only observed that Mrs. Kellett had a cousin out there who had been wounded at Tel-el-Kebir, and came home, it was supposed, to die, "instead of which" he had recovered and married the only daughter of a rich soap-boiler in Leeds.

"None but the brave deserve the fair," observed Richard.

"There does not seem to be much glory in thrashing a lot of blacks," said Charlie; "they can't possibly stand up to our fellows."

"Don't be too sure of that. I have heard men who have been out there say that some of the Soudanese tribes are desperate fighters."

"It is terrible to reflect on the cost of these fruitless wars," remarked Mr. Landon solemnly; "they will tell heavily on the income tax. I should not be surprised if we had an additional twopence in the pound next year."

"I am sure that is not much," exclaimed Emily.

"I have a great respect for pennies, knowing how difficult it is sometimes—indeed often—to get them," said Andrée, in her soft clear voice.

"That is a respect very little shared by young ladies in general; coppers are coppers to them. They never imagine they *can multiply* themselves into pounds."

"My experience is the other way. I know, well how rapidly gold can dissipate itself into pennies," said Charlie.

"An excellent lesson to have learned, though it implies a painful experience," put in the master of the house approvingly. "Speaking of pounds and pennies, as we have the pleasure of Richard's company this evening, and he would not like to lose your society, suppose we postpone our business talk, Andrée, to another occasion."

"Very well; I suppose you will be at home tomorrow?"

"Yes, certainly," he returned, seeing that both his sons were listening with surprised faces. Here Mrs. Landon rose, and the ladies retreated to the drawing-room.

The men did not stay long behind them.

Andrée was seated on a low basket-chair in one of the windows, trying to read a thick, solemn-looking volume by the fading light.

"So you are going to put my father through his drill," said Richard, throwing himself on the sofa near her.

"What do you mean?" she asked, turning a pair of serious, questioning eyes upon him.

"Why, ask for an account of his stewardship."

"Is it wrong to do so?" she asked.

"No, by no means; you are perfectly right. Your demand shows a good deal of character." Silence. Richard felt it very difficult to find any suitable words, and, glancing at the book in his cousin's hands, he asked, "What are your studies?"

"A very absorbing book—'Lecky's History of European Morals.'"

"That is indeed a serious undertaking. Are you not afraid it will give you mental indigestion?"

"Have you read it?" asked Andrée; "if not, pray do; it is a wonderful book. I have viewed everything differently since I did."

"Well, no; I have seen copious reviews of it, and cannot help fancying that it is not exactly suited to a young lady's perusal."

"Why?"

The calm earnestness of this interrogation was rather silencing.

"It would be more agreeable not to say. It treats of topics which are not generally supposed to be included in a lady's liberal education."

"It treats of terrible realities," said Andrée seriously, "and it is always good to know the truth."

"Yet some wiseacres say, 'Truth is not to be told at all times.'"

"That must be the aphorism of some philosophic *valet de chambre*," she returned, with a grave but pleasant smile. "Things which are never named will never be remedied."

"Things are seldom remedied, Miss Nugent—or may I call you Andrée, as the rest do?" She bent her head. "Things change; you get one evil instead of another, but I don't know that there is much improvement."

"That is a paralyzing belief! I would rather not live if I thought so," exclaimed Andrée.

"Then pray do not. It is best to believe what gives you most pleasure; and there is a good deal of pleasure to be got out of life."

"I do not think you and I are likely to agree," she said slowly.

"I shall be most happy to accept conversion at your hands, Andrée," he returned, smiling. "Why are you so

serious, so full of thought, when you hold the means of enjoyment in your hands?"

"Do I?" she began, when Emily, who had left the room a little while before, came in.

"Do come out. It is quite delightful in the garden. Mrs. Kellett is there," she said. "I don't think it would even do you harm, mother. I will fetch you a wrap."

Andrée would have preferred staying where she was and talking to Richard Landon, who was much the most intelligent person she had met in London, though his ideas distressed her; but as Mrs. Landon rose to comply with her daughter's suggestion, she felt she must follow.

"Pray," asked Richard, "are you admitted *en tiers* to the devoted friendship which exists between my sister and Mrs. Kellett?"

"Not yet. I have not even seen the lady, though she has been good enough to call upon me and invite me to her house. I was out when she came, and Emily is oftener with her than at home."

"She is a good-natured little woman, and rather pretty," he returned, in a tone that conveyed an impression of her complete insignificance.

The moon was up when they reached the garden, which was sweet and cool, and gave sufficient light to show that Mrs. Kellett looked remarkably pretty, with a black lace scarf arranged coquettishly over her fair, curly hair. She was posed upon a seat where the moonbeams fell full upon her, and at her side, smoking a thick cigar, was a short, stout, red-faced man, considerably her senior, a man in whose look and bearing horsiness struggled with an air of professional respectability.

"Good evening, Mrs. Landon," cried Mrs. Kellett, as soon as she perceived the elder lady. "It is ever so much nicer out here than in a stuffy room. Even Ben, who

generally sleeps all the evening, has come out, you see." Whereupon Ben, whose rather bullet head was defended from the night air by a gorgeous red and gold smoking cap, rose, greeted his partner's wife, and vacated his place in her favour.

"Let me introduce my niece, Miss Nugent, to you," said Mrs. Landon. "Richard, find a seat for Andrée." He went with alacrity to fetch one of the garden-chairs which stood about, and then leant on the back of it as they grouped themselves for a talk.

"How are the children?" asked Mrs. Landon.

"They are pretty well—all except Ethel, and she is a little drooping. I am thinking of going to Ryde for a few days with her. Do you know Ryde, Richard?"

"I have been there once or twice."

"Do you think it would suit us?" persisted Mrs. Kellett.

"How can I possibly tell?"

"You and Emily ought to run down for a couple of days while I am there, it would freshen you up."

"You are very good," said Richard.

"I suppose you have not been at the seaside in England, Miss Nugent?" continued Mrs. Kellett, with a polite smile to Andrée.

"Never," said Andrée briefly.

"I am sure I should be very happy if you would come too. Do you know I began to think I should never see you; we always missed."

"Yes, I have been unfortunate."

"I hope you will come and see me without ceremony. Just run in and out like dear Emily. My house is over there, at the left corner opposite. It's so nice to have this pleasure-ground. Most of the people in the gardens are



nice enough; if they are not, why, we send them to Coventry, don't we, Richard?"

But Richard was stroking a pretty little Yorkshire terrier, a pet of the speaker, and did not hear, or at any rate reply.

"Richard is the universal referee, as Whiteley is the universal provider," said Mr. Kellett with a fat laugh. He was a jovial, happy soul, to whose share all the common-law business of the firm fell, and would have gladly attended every race in the country if a conscientious desire to do his duty by his family and his firm had not kept him to his quill-driving instead of yielding to his taste for "handling the ribbons."

"My husband, Miss Nugent," said Mrs. Kellett, thus reminded of his existence.

"Glad you thought of mentioning me, my dear. I began to be afraid I should not have the honour of being presented to Miss Nugent."

"The formality was scarcely necessary," said Andrée, smiling.

"Thinks no small beer of herself," was Mr. Kellett's mental comment. "I suppose those young chaps of Landon's are buttering her up to no end." "Where's Charlie?" he said aloud.

"I don't know. He vanished after dinner."

"I'd lay long odds he is in at Lorrimer's. I heard singing and violin scraping there just now. I fancy he is hard hit in that quarter."

"A boyish whim," said Mrs. Landon gently.

"Of which he'll have plenty, I dare say, before he settles down," cried Mrs. Kellett, "but that will do him no harm. It's not everyone who is so cool and calculating as Mr. Richard. I tell him he has a millstone instead of a heart," laughing excitedly.

"That at least grants me a large heart," he returned quietly.

"Take a turn round the garden, Andrée, we may hear some of the sweet sounds which are supposed to regale Charlie's ears." Andrée rose at once. She was not sure that she liked Richard as much as his brother, but he interested her; she could talk to him. He seemed brighter and more at ease when he got away from the rest. Presently he asked if she intended going to Lady Sarah Temple's ball.

"Yes. Your sister tells me that we shall probably meet some of the literary and artistic stars of London, and I should like to see them, even at a distance; but I fear I shall not know which they are."

"I shall endeavour to point them out to you."

"Thank you; but I cannot expect you to be with us all the time. Do you know many authors?"

"I have a slight acquaintance with several; but I know more of artists."

"Do you know any journalists?"

"Yes, a few. Some of them are gentlemanly fellows enough, but the mass are terrible Bohemians."

"Yet some of the Bohemians are very good," said Andrée with a sigh.

"Why, how do you know?" asked Richard, smiling.

"I knew many once, but that was long ago."

"There is not a very 'long ago' in your life," he returned; while he thought, "I suppose she means the needy rascals her father consorted with. Lucky for her he has been removed." There was a pause, while Richard reflected on the intolerable nuisance Mrs. Kellett was becoming. "She is positively vulgar, and pretty though she is, shows to terrible disadvantage even near so plain a girl as this, who is certainly a lady."

Here Andrée broke in on his reflections with an astonishing question: "Pray can you tell me what five per cent. means?"

"Five per cent.?" in a startled tone. "Why five per cent. is five pounds on every hundred—for the use of the hundred. Are you contemplating making or raising a loan, or simply preparing a hot corner for my father when you put him under fire?"

"No, no, indeed; but I want to know more. How much is five per cent. on a smaller sum?"

"It is always five per cent.—but it is a shilling in every pound, if that is what you want to know."

"Yes, thank you, it is."

"You have set up a torturing curiosity in my usually tranquil mind," said Richard.

Andrée laughed, but offered no explanation.

On returning they found the rest of the party on their feet, and exchanging "Good nights."

Mrs. Kellett was laughing loudly at some witticism of her own. Her husband strolled on, and Mrs. Landon turned towards her own house. Andrée caught sight of her handkerchief which had dropped beside her chair, and stooped to pick it up, when she heard Mrs. Kellett say in a suppressed voice, with a sob, "You are too, *too* cruel." Andrée retreated swiftly; but when she overtook Mrs. Landon Richard was not with his mother, nor did he come up with them till they had reached the steps which led into the house.

## CHAPTER IV.

### A DEBATE.

NEXT day Mr. Landon was late for dinner, quite half an hour late; this seldom occurred, but it was the busiest part of the year. The law courts were crowded with cases, and *the* firm overwhelmed with work.

Mr. Landon, therefore, not unnaturally forgot his niece's wish for information about her property, and she, seeing that he was weary, and even more silent than usual, did not like to trouble him.

Then came Sunday, a dreadfully dull day at Chichester Gardens, but well suited, Andrée thought, for the conversation she wished to have with her host.

Late dinner was, on the Sabbath, converted to cold supper at eight or half past, to suit the ladies of the family, who usually attended evening service. On the present occasion Andrée said she would stay at home, and as Mrs. Landon and Emily left the drawing-room, where Mr. Landon had remained after tea because some neighbours had called before he could escape, she opened her subject at once.

"You said you would be so kind as to give me some information, Mr. Landon; may I talk to you now?"

"What!" he exclaimed, as if greatly surprised, "on Sunday evening?"

"If you have any serious objection, of course I shall

not speak of business, but on week days you are often very tired."

"No, I cannot say I have any objection. A confidential conversation can scarcely be considered business, but very strict people might object."

"I am not at all strict," said Andrée quietly. "I wish very much to know what money and property I really possess, and how much I may spend. You told me, when you came to Paris, that I had become rich, and you have since given me what seems to me, a quantity of money, and which is nearly all gone, but I know nothing certainly."

"Ahem! Well, Andrée, I must first premise that during your minority you have no right whatever to put these questions, nor to demand any information respecting your property; so soon as you are of age of course a full account of everything will be given to you; but as you seem to me a sensible girl, with some idea of the value of money—" ("Thank you," said Andrée, as he paused.)—"I will give you a rough outline of your affairs." He cleared his throat and proceeded to describe sundry investments in Indian railways, Colonial stock, and pretty trifles in English railway debentures; a large balance standing at the bank, etc.; "and here I must point out that the largest portion of your property consists of shares in the well-known and old-established bank of Witham and Wells, which is largely connected with the Eastern Counties. The Withams are Norfolk people. Both the father and grandfather of the late Miss Witham were the chief owners of that bank. The father left the larger part of his fortune to his son, who quickly dissipated it and died. Miss Witham was of a saving turn, though she occasionally did very generous acts; but she increased her store, and, I hope, when I hand your

property over to you, to have added not inconsiderably to its bulk."

"I feel almost frightened at the idea of possessing all this," said Andrée in a low tone, a serious expression stealing over her strong face; "still, I have to ask you how much money I shall have a year to spend?"

"I cannot say exactly from memory; moreover, your money is all safely invested at a moderate rate. The bank shares pay high interest, and would now sell for three-fourths more than they cost, only it would be folly to move your money. There will be fluctuations, of course, but almost all your investments have an upward tendency. I should say, roughly, your income is little under three thousand a year."

"Three thousand a year," repeated Andrée, as if to herself, "that is two hundred and fifty pounds a month. How many families have been brought up and educated on no more yearly!"

"Yes, in the humbler classes," said Mr. Landon. "Do not imagine it is an inexhaustible sum, nor allow yourself reckless expenditure; by the time you reach your majority you will have acquired many wants which appertain to your new position, and found many modes of expenditure which are unknown to you now." Mr. Landon always spoke to Andrée with a certain cold pomposity. He was anxious to impress and subdue her, and had a constant dim consciousness that he failed to do so.

"Hitherto my wants have been very few," returned Andrée, with a sad smile, "and now I don't seem to wish much for anything. Still, within certain limits, I suppose I may have what I like?"

"Of course, of course; in any case I intended to allow you a hundred and fifty pounds a year for dress and pocket-money. I see you have a laudable wish to improve

yourself, and any lessons you may wish to take shall be provided for separately. Is there anything else?"

"Yes; I only tell you what I wish; if you consider I ask too much you can refuse."

"Pray let me hear your wishes."

There was a pause, during which Andrée seemed in deep thought.

"First of all, I should like to pay my debts. I hope you are properly remunerated for what my residence in your house costs?"

Mr. Landon waved his hands loftily.

"I am quite satisfied," he said.

"Then," she resumed, "I want to refund to my aunt, Madame Carrichon, all that I have cost her for nearly five years."

"I do not know that I have power to do this; your majority is not very far off, then you can do as you choose."

"A year and a half is a long time to wait when it is a struggle to make the quarters meet, Mr. Landon! I have made a calculation, it took me some trouble, but it is, I think, fair. I find I must have cost Madame Carrichon, for the four and a half years I was on her hands, about five thousand eight hundred and fifty francs, without clothes. I have only reckoned at twenty-five francs a week. Her highest price is thirty francs."

"But," began Mr. Landon, looking aghast at the sum she mentioned (he was unaccustomed to a decimal currency), "this is impossible!"

"You are frightened at the amount of francs. It really means two hundred and thirty-four pounds."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mr. Landon.

"Madame Carrichon is not exactly a lovable woman, but she saved me from starvation! My only friends had

left Paris and gone I know not where ; I was absolutely destitute. One does not forget such things. Help me in this, and I shall thank you. When I am my own mistress I shall add what I choose."

Mr. Landon muttered that he would consider the matter.

"Then, as I want to go to my music lessons, and probably others, I should like a respectable, perhaps elderly, maid of my own to come with me, so that I should not interfere with the service of your house ; and I should like a carriage, to go about to long distances, which it would give me pleasure to make of use to Mrs. Landon and your daughter also."

"On my word, the young lady has a very clear idea of what she wants ; it would be imprudent to make an enemy of her," thought Mr. Landon.

"All this is reasonable enough ; I shall see how it can be best carried out," he said. "You seem to have thought out your plans very well."

"I have been obliged to think all my life," she returned gravely.

"I have to mention two more points, and I will trouble you no more. I want very much to find a Mr. John Thurston, of whom I have lost sight of for more than five years. I am more deeply in his debt than in Madame Carrichon's, and yet I hardly know what or how to pay him."

"This is a serious matter, my dear niece." He rarely mentioned their relationship, and Andrée shrank from the word. "We must examine into the man's claims and resist imposition."

"You are mistaken, Mr. Landon ; John Thurston will never make any claim, nor has he any acknowledgment of our debt to him."



"A gambling transaction, I suppose?"

Andrée shook her head. "He was my father's best friend: he has brought us bread when we had neither fire nor food, he has shared his last five-franc piece with us when he did not know where to find another, and he nursed my father through his last illness but one; nothing can repay him."

"My dear Andrée," exclaimed Mr. Landon, unusually disturbed, "pray banish these terrible humiliating memories from your mind; never let them pass your lips to my wife or Emily. It is too appalling to think that you have been dragged through such degradation."

"It has not degraded me," returned Andrée, with much composure; "why should it? Pray help me to find this good friend. I shall know no peace until I thank him,—until I see him face to face."

Mr. Landon trembled. His appreciation of his niece had increased almost to admiration in the course of the conversation. She might prove a valuable partner in every sense for either of his sons, and now this suggestion of an out-of-elbows boon companion of her disreputable father came like a ragged scarecrow to frighten away his dawning hopes. No, he would never be instrumental in bringing about such a meeting, he must consult Richard. "Was this person an old friend of your father's?"

"No, they had not known each other very long; John Thurston was quite a young man."

Worse and worse, thought Mr. Landon, already seeing the heiress slipping from his grasp.

"I—I—will consult Peering, he is one of our most experienced detectives, as to what steps ought to be taken; I don't think it would be well to advertise, but we'll see—we'll see. Now, Andrée, what is your last point?"

"It is another debt, and to me, especially, a debt of

honour. About ten years ago you lent twenty pounds to my father; I want to repay it; with interest it must now amount to nearly forty pounds. I do not want you to lose a farthing through my father, nor would he if—if he had not died in the cruellest poverty. You must take this money, Mr. Landon, you will do me a great favour by doing so."

Mr. Landon's face grew very stern.

"I understand this expression of repugnance to me," he said slowly. "I have been made to seem in your eyes a hard-hearted, close-fisted miser; you must hear my defence—nay, I insist—I shall offend you as little as I can. It is nearly eleven years ago since I *gave* that money to my brother, for I never expected to see it again; I was then in very much poorer circumstances than at present, and my children's education was costly, and likely to last some years longer. Your father *ought* not to have required a loan of twenty pounds from any one; a little prudence and perseverance would have made him a tolerably successful man. I had my family to consider, and from a sense of duty, when a second application quickly followed the first, I declined to comply, nor do I regret having done so. If everyone acceded to such demands the weak and improvident would devour the earnings of the conscientious workers, and the confusion which generally rules would be worse confounded. Hereafter you will find that if you yield to the endless petitions which may, no doubt, touch your heart, you will soon be beggared without benefitting a single individual, for those who cannot help themselves can rarely be helped by others."

"You know life better than I can possibly know it, but it is a harsh doctrine, and I will not offend you by pressing my wish. I should be happier if

I could rid myself of that burden, for a burden it will always be."

"Let us drop the subject," returned Mr. Landon stiffly. There was a somewhat awkward pause, broken at last by Andrée.

"I have told you everything, and am much obliged by your readiness to oblige me. Of all my requests the one I am most eager about is the attempt to discover John Thurston and his wife."

"His wife! oh, he is married, is he?"

"Yes, I knew his wife well, she was one of the girls at Madame Carrichon's, so sweet and good; she was rather delicate, scarcely fit to go about and work, so he married her—to take care of her, I think. He got some employment in London, and they came over here, then they went abroad somewhere and I lost them," she concluded, in an infinitely sad tone.

"I shall do my best to find your friends," returned Mr. Landon with more alacrity than he had yet spoken; "if they are in England it will not be difficult; as to the more personal matters, they can be easily arranged. I shall ask Mrs. Landon to look for a suitable maid at once."

"Thank you," said Andrée; "then I need trouble you no further," and then she quietly left the room.

"She has been put against me by that scamp of a father," thought Mr. Landon as he reviewed the conversation. "I always thought she disliked me. If she does not marry some sensible man she will be eaten up by beggars of every kind, that is if she is of the same mind *after* she has the handling of her own money. The actual possession of money often suggests care of it. Probably that is at the bottom of the goodness poor people show to the poor of which we hear so much. It is easier to share

a few pence than a thousand pounds. Yes, she is some ways a sensible, cool-headed young woman, and may learn prudence. I wonder which of my boys will marry her? It would be folly to let the money go out of the family."

He rose and strolled into the garden, hoping to find Mr. Kellett, in order to make some slight change in the business arrangements of the morrow.

When Andrée reached her own room she drew up the sun-blind—the day had been very warm—and sat down in a low basket-chair with a book in her hand, but really to think. She was very glad that the interview was over. Though she had kept so cool a front, she had felt nervous at having to say so much to Mr. Landon, and half afraid to touch the subject of her father's debt to him lest she should say too much or lose her self-control; now she thought she had said too little, and made several admirable speeches in her own mind, as usual, too late to utter them, for she could never allude to the subject again. Well, at all events she let Mr. Landon know how she felt. Yet there was truth in what he said, only a man should not be so hard to his own brother! Would he (Landon) really try to find John Thurston and his wife? She had detected his reluctance to make the attempt. If he did not, she would take the matter into her own hands. She was determined to find them. Then came with a delightful glow the sense of power that the possession of money brings. Ah! if she only had her father here to share it with her! How intensely he could enjoy, how bitterly he could suffer! How vividly she recalled the varied expressions of his speaking face as he returned to their lofty but sordid lodging, sometimes at early morn, sometimes in the late afternoon, either radiant with a full purse, or despairing with an empty one. How, in the former case, the first expenditure was some

dainty gift of dress or ornament for herself; in the latter, the disappearance of his watch and chain, and often his gold sleeve-links into the bargain! It was a terrible time, that first illness of the kindly, sympathetic, weak, improvident father she loved so well! What should she have done then without John Thurston? Madame Carrichon and Major Nugent had one of their not infrequent quarrels, and for six months Andrée had seen nothing of her aunt; she would have been absolutely alone if Thurston, who had a room on the same flat with them, had not helped her. They had known him for nearly two years previously, and his fortunes seemed to be as fluctuating as Nugent's. Andrée was under the impression that he was a medical student, but he didn't seem to study much. Sometimes her father lent him money, and oftener Thurston supplied her father with funds. He was wonderfully kind to the lonely little girl, bringing her presents, chiefly rather shabby books as to the outsides, but what treasures as to the contents! What little knowledge she had was chiefly gathered from Thurston's books and talk. He was fond of writing, sometimes scribbling for hours in his room, and sometimes disappearing for days and returning in anything but renewed health and spirits. After that illness of her father's Thurston seemed a little better dressed and stayed more in the house. A reconciliation also took place between the Major and his sister-in-law, and Andrée was once more admitted into the sacred precincts of the Pension.

There she made great friends with a new inmate, a delicate-looking English governess, who came to Paris imagining she had but to ask and she would find employment. She was beautifully fair, with big blue eyes—angelic eyes Andrée thought them—and quantities of pale golden hair. She was greatly depressed, and had nothing

to occupy her, so she frequently came to see Major Nugent's little daughter, for Andrée was little more than thirteen then; and it was delightful to her to have such a companion, as Major Nugent rarely dined at home. The two girls used to manage a mid-day repast of chocolate and bread, or *macaroni à l'Italienne*, which Andrée made quite well; or, if the funds permitted, some cheap dainty from the nearest *charcuterie*.

These were very happy days for Andrée, and soon a new ingredient came to beautify and to add interest to them. Thurston and Lilly Vernon, Andrée's new friend, naturally became acquainted. Soon, very soon, by some instinct she could not explain, the quiet, plain little girl began to feel rather than observe that something sweeter and closer, yet less familiar than friendship, was growing up with the swift growth of Jonah's gourd between the two penniless waifs. They were so happy together, so content with everything; they were so heavenly kind to their little friend, and she was wonderfully happy in their happiness; both seemed so beautiful in her eyes. Though John Thurston was dark and rugged-looking and tall, with big bones and very little flesh, but then his smile was sweet, and his eyes full of a tender light that neither poverty nor the consciousness of a hard struggle before him could quench.

Finally there came a day—a beautiful summer's day—when the Major was flush of cash, and Thurston, who had been writing hard of late, seemed also in funds, when they all went for a day's pleasure to the beautiful woods of Meudon by one of the river steamers, and dined at a pleasant, cheap little restaurant under the shade of the trees. How clearly all the history came out of the dusky mental hiding-places where such memories lurk, as if to preserve their colours all the fresher! Ah! it was in

every sense a lovely day; only one shadow hung over it—poor Lilly had spent all her money, and must soon return to a rather unpleasant stepmother and the position of upper servant in a crowded, insufficiently supplied home.

Still it was a glorious day, and Andrée remembered thinking that her friend looked lovely as the weather when the shades of evening closed round them. John Thurston escorted Lilly back to Madame Carrichon's, and Major Nugent took his tired child home. Here he sat down to read the evening paper and sip a little brandy and water, while Andrée collapsed on the sofa and at once fell asleep.

She awoke with a sound of voices in her ears—Thurston had come in, and was in serious conversation with her father.

"It's deuced imprudent—nothing could be more; but, by George, I believe it's the best thing you can do. Two negatives are equal to an affirmative, and nothing keeps a fellow so straight as a sweet wife. I believe if mine hadn't been taken from me I'd have been well off now. Ah! there never was such a loss! I fancy your sweet-heart is a bit of an angel too."

"At any rate she can't be worse off than she is, and she'll be happy with me. Besides, I have hopes, as I told you. Of course we must wait a bit; but it's heavenly to know she loves me," said Thurston.

"Well, whatever happens, my boy, never touch a card again."

"No, and I haven't for some time past.—Why, Andrée, my pet, are you awake!" Then the conference broke up, but Andrée knew quite well that her dear friends had made up their minds to marry.

She was pleased at the notion, but she soon found that *her bright days* were over.

Thurston escorted Lilly to London, and did not return to Paris. Both wrote occasionally, but letters were a poor substitute for personal intercourse. Then came a rapturous letter; a farce Thurston had written and rewritten in his garret had been accepted at a fair price, and he was to be married the following week. A long pause in the correspondence ensued. Next a letter from Lilly told that her husband was fortunate in getting work on a leading provincial newspaper in a large northern town, and then the correspondence died out. Troubles closed round father and daughter, till death closed that chapter of Andrée's life.

It was sad that such dear companions had slipped from her hold; but their silence never made her fear that it was caused by coldness or indifference. They had a hard struggle too, and once they met all would be the same as ever. This was the one bit of romance in Andrée's somewhat denuded life, and as she developed the memory of it grew sweeter and more vivid—a fountain, as it were, of living water, that kept her heart from dying of the parching drought, the terrible despair of happiness which too often comes when the spirit can see nothing in the future, nor remember anything in the past but clouds and thick darkness, the pressure of sordid wants, the disheartening of perpetual failure. Surely the greatest joy of life, the greatest crown a woman could win, would be to see eyes brighten and grow tender at one's approach, as John's used to do at Lilly's! But Lilly was beautiful as well as sweet and good, and Andrée must never allow herself to expect such bliss, it would be too foolish.

She looked at herself in the glass very steadily, and sighed; then a quiet smile stole to her lips and eyes. "Life has many sides," she said to herself, "and I am fortunate. *I must find John and his wife, perhaps they*



might come and live with me. It is quite six years since I heard of them. The letter telling of my poor dear father's death was returned to me. Oh! they may both be dead too!—but no! that would be too, too cruel!”

She roused herself from the prolonged review of the sweet and bitter past.

“I must write to poor Maud. Her last letter is more than a fortnight old, and she did not seem too happy. I fear a solemn, stately English country house will not suit her, she is really a Bohemian! I wish I had a house of my own to ask her to. How curious it will be to have a house of my own, with servants, and what is called an establishment! Will it be like a home to me? I fear not. Four walls and beautiful furniture, servants, and visitors, do not make home! I suppose I must hire someone to live with me. I will not stay here. I want to be my own mistress, though I like Mrs. Landon and Charlie and—Richard? I am not sure. He talks best, he has more ideas, and seems to consider me worth talking to, but none of them would think much of me if I had not this money.”

Then her thoughts reverted to the words she had overheard in the garden, “You are too, too cruel!” and the tone of anger and of pain in which they were uttered; they could only have been addressed to Richard Landon, who was, she (Andrée) thought, gone on with his mother. Mr. Kellett had walked away towards his own house, and Richard had ultimately come up after Andrée had joined Mrs. Landon. It was to him they must have been spoken, and the circumstance puzzled Andrée; she had thought of it before. She again dismissed it from her mind, however, deciding that she was making a mountain of a molehill. Mrs. Kellett was evidently on the most familiar terms with the whole family, and the expression

might only have been meant in jest. Mrs. Kellett seemed to Andrée an exceedingly common and rather ill-bred woman, and so she dismissed her from her mind ; and with a devout wish that Mr. Landon would allow her to send the sum she had so painfully calculated to her stern but not unkind aunt, she applied herself to her letter.

## CHAPTER V.

### IN SOCIETY.

MR. LANDON was as good as his word. A carriage was soon at Andrée's disposal, which both Mrs. Landon and Emily found a great convenience. Also a suitable lady's maid of the highest respectability was, before long, added to the Chichester Gardens establishment; while her guardian assured Andrée that he was looking into things in order to ascertain if he had power to pay away so much of his ward's money as would acquit her of what she considered was her debt to Madame Carrichon. Mr. Landon had an abstract love of saving. He liked to live well within his income—a wholesome tendency, but one which easily becomes exaggerated. Indeed, his wife shrewdly suspected that he could perfectly well afford a carriage himself, but did not give herself the trouble of asking for one. Experience had taught her that her wishes were not of the slightest importance to her husband, who, though not unkind, had long ceased to consider her as anything more than a very presentable house-keeper—not extravagant, because he had stamped that out—but indifferent to saving, unambitious, and generally weak. Each of her children had more of importance and influence with their father than his wife, partly because they were his; and Mrs. Landon had, after a few early struggles, accepted the position. She was a woman of far finer fibre and higher tone than either husband or

children, except, perhaps, her youngest son, who was warmly attached to her, and almost valued her as she ought to be valued. It was natural that a mutual liking should spring up between Andrée and Mrs. Landon; but it was little noticed by the rest, except, perhaps, by Richard, who, not living in the house, perceived more when he visited it.

Emily's slight and unconscious contempt for the plain, unfashionable heiress began to be considerably modified when she found that her presence contributed a good deal to an improved condition of things, and she thought it worth while to cultivate a certain degree of intimacy with her, and tried to rouse some interest in dress, fashion, and finery in Andrée, who was, Emily considered, stupidly indifferent to such matters—the result, no doubt, of having been brought up among low people.

She did her best to draw her rich cousin into an intimacy with Mrs. Kellett, whom she (Emily) accepted as a person of taste and fashion, and to whom she owed many of the gaieties which enlivened her rather monotonous existence. It was no easy matter to induce Andrée to take up what she did not like. She therefore refused, as civilly as she could, endless invitations to snug little luncheons “all to ourselves,” “quiet cups of tea, where we talk over our summer plans,” until she feared to give offence, and felt obliged to accept occasionally. Mrs. Kellett always lamented that Miss Nugent did not come to her dance—“Jolly little dance, wasn't it, Em?”

“I was so strange. I had no courage to go anywhere.”

“I never heard of a girl afraid of a dance before,” cried Mrs. Kellett, opening her pretty light blue eyes; “and a girl fresh from Paris too,” for like many visitors who have spent a few days now and then in the beautiful

city, she fancied it a paradise of theatres, suppers, dances, and dress.

"Life can be very serious in Paris, I assure you; and I don't fancy I shall ever be much of a ball-goer."

"Well, I must say I do love a good dance—don't you, Emily? I am sure you ought! She never sits down, Miss Nugent, the whole evening."

"That is enough to make balls very pleasant," returned Andrée, observing the sugared flattery which Mrs. Kellett invariably bestowed on her young friend.

They were at tea in Mrs. Kellett's pretty morning room, which opened on the pleasure-ground, and her children, a pretty boy and girl, beautifully dressed, ran to and fro in their play.

"Come and speak to the pretty lady," said their mother; "and you have not said how do you do to dear Emily."

The little girl ran up to Andrée frankly enough, and allowed herself to be taken upon her knee; but the boy stood shyly aloof.

"Come here, my darling," cried his mother, and Andrée noticed the love and tenderness which spoke in her eyes and gave music to her voice.

"She has an affectionate heart for her children at all events," thought Andrée, looking at her with suddenly awakened interest. Presently the boy gathered courage to make friends, and brought Andrée a new drawing-book and pencil to admire, which she did, and began to copy some of the more advanced drawings for him. He was deeply interested, and quite ready to stand beside her, while his sister ran back to her play.

"He has wonderful taste for drawing," said Mrs. Kellett, stroking his hair fondly, "considering he is only just turned six."

"Six!" repeated Andrée, looking at her. "It seems incredible that you should have a boy of six. Why, you seem to me years younger than myself."

"I married young, perhaps too young!" returned Mrs. Kellett with a sigh.

"Then you will have the pleasure of being young with your children. So, in a way you have secured the future."

"The future!" said Mrs. Kellett with a strange laugh. "Oh! I never think of *that*!"

Andrée thought it a curious speech. But Emily turned the subject by asking what she was going to wear at Lady Sarah Temple's ball.

"Unfortunately I shall not be in town," returned Mrs. Kellett, an increased pink flushing her cheek. "You see Ethel wants change, and Philip would not be the worse for it, so I am going to Ryde the end of this week, and will stay about ten days, so I shall miss that grand festivity."

"I do not care much about going," returned Emily. "It was terribly dull at last year's ball. I got very little dancing, and Richard hardly came near us."

"Oh! I suppose Richard is so grand now, he does not deign to dance!" said Mrs. Kellett.

"I don't believe he does. You know he only danced with *you* at your party."

"Mere civility to the hostess," returned Mrs. Kellett quickly.

"Oh, you have always been great friends. By the way, Andrée, you ought to order your dress, for I suppose you will have a new one for this affair at Lady——"

"No, I have a very nice dress which I have never worn,—the grey one with black lace, which your mother likes."

"But, Andrée, that is only a dinner dress."

"It must do for a supper also," said Andrée, laughing. "I have more dresses than I can ever wear, and I shall not add to their number for some time."

"It is rather odd-looking I assure you."

"It will suit me all the better; nothing makes *me* look young!—Come out with you and play ball? Yes, dear, with pleasure,"—this to her new little friend Philip—"if mamma will permit me."

"Is she a screw?" asked Mrs. Kellett in a tone of acute curiosity, when Andrée had gone out.

"No; in some things quite the reverse; but she does not care in the least for dress. I fancy she knows she is—not exactly a fright, but decidedly plain, and thinks it not worth while troubling about."

"You think her very plain, dear, do you?"

"Yes, certainly; I have seen her look bright and pleasant, but not often. However, that is not so much matter for a girl with all her money. She is sure to marry."

"Which of your brothers is going to marry her?" asked Mrs. Kellett, laughing.

"I am sure I do not know; she seems very friendly with Charlie, and Richard will want something extra fine and rich in a wife if he ever marries."

"Ah, yes, *if*," echoed Mrs. Kellett complacently.

Andrée stuck to her decision and went to Lady Sarah's ball in her grey dress. It suited her very well; though she said little on the subject, Andrée was careful in her choice of garments; she had not lived in Paris for nothing, and in matters of taste was keenly alive to the fitness of things. Nothing in her dress ever caught the eye, or offended it. Her chief object was to escape observation, *and produce* an effect of quiet harmony. She was quite

indifferent to jewels—refused to buy any, and beyond a brooch and a few good old-fashioned rings, which came to her with much miscellaneous personality from the late Miss Witham, never wore any.

She was pleased to see a great London party, but not the least excited about going to the ball. She was so convinced that she had none of the gifts which attracted partners and attention, that she had never looked forward to any occasion with the fluttered, half nervous anticipation of making a success which sometimes gives a sort of radiant charm to very young inexperienced girls. She was going to see, not to be seen. Emily Landon, though not very impressionable, was almost nervous at the idea of the brilliant evening which awaited her. It was the first time they had been invited to Lady Sarah's yearly ball, and she felt the importance of the occasion. Charlie had been kept very late at the office, and preferred to stay at home, so the three ladies started without him.

It was some time before they reached the door, as the line of carriages setting down was long, and the narrowness of the street increased the difficulties of approach; and when they had effected an entrance, Andrée was almost bewildered by the beauty and quantity of the flowers, the brilliant light, the flashing jewels and gorgeous dresses, the loud buzz of continuous voices, the louder calling out of noble names, the array of powdered footmen interspersed with the black coats of the hired waiters; she had never dreamed of such splendours, and watched the scene with deep interest.

Arrived at length on the landing where Lady Sarah Temple was stationed, she was almost alarmed by the aspect of her hostess. Tall and stately, age had been merciful in sparing her the ordinary fleshly development; *skilful dressmakers can do almost anything with thin*



people, and she was a marvel of art. Her dress seemed to Andrée all crimson velvet and gold, rare old lace and endless jewels,—diamonds and emeralds on her neck, diamond butterflies holding up her sleeves; diamonds surmounting her black abundant hair, from under which beamed a pair of penetrating and rather sorrowful black eyes, while their glitter was enhanced by the rich colouring of cheek and lips. An exquisitely painted fan with jewelled sticks hung by a ribbon from her arm, and a gold double eye-glass from a brooch which nestled among her lace.

Andrée underwent the brief ceremony of introduction with much equanimity; she would probably never see her superb hostess again, and felt apart from and independent of the world in which she moved and had her being; yet she felt that Lady Sarah eyed her attentively. Behind the lady of the house stood Richard Landon, evidently quite at home. "Very glad to see you," said Lady Sarah in a refined, high-bred voice, cold and clear, as she shook hands with Mrs. Landon, "and Miss Nugent. Richard, you must find partners for your sister and cousin. I commit them to your care"; and they passed on to the ball-room.

"Do not mind me," said Andrée, as Richard found a seat for his mother; "I would rather stay with Mrs. Landon and look on."

"Later I hope you will dance with me," returned Richard, imprudently, he thought the next moment, as he went in search of some of the young men for whom he had procured cards to make them pay for their footing by dancing with his womankind. "Probably she does not know how to dance," he continued to reflect, "and for no prospective advantage can I exhibit myself with a failure; besides, I must do much better if I marry at all."

Emily provided for, Richard devoted himself to a wealthy widow, older a little than he was, and disposed, he only thought, to look on him with partial eyes. Meanwhile Mrs. Landon and Andrée gazed with some bewilderment on the throng of strangers, feeling rather like castaways, till, just before the waltz came to an end, a well-known Q.C., who in his junior days, and even since he took silk," occasionally dined at her house, recognized her, with some surprise, and stopped to speak with her, mistaking Andrée for her daughter. Then, the dance over, Richard's desirable partner found her next cavalier waiting for her. He therefore for a while was self-denying enough to stay and point out some celebrities to his cousin and mother, and presently, when Emily rejoined them, took the former to look at the conservatory and the decorations of the passages leading to it.

"It is all quite wonderful," said Andrée, looking round with admiration. "Naturally I think of what a sum it must have cost."

"I see you are of an economic turn," said Richard, with a superior smile. "I suppose there are a dozen or so equally expensive entertainments going on in town tonight; so a good deal of money must be circulated among the working classes."

"True; that is the best part of it."

"I see you will develop into a Lady Bountiful, and no doubt do an immense amount of harm." Andrée smiled but did not reply. He observed that he was unconsciously beating time with her fan to the lively music of a set of lancers, and seized the opportunity. "You are fond of dancing, and probably have a ear for time and tune. Have you had much dancing in Paris?"

"Not very much," she returned, sending a look of

quite humour into his eyes; "still I can dance; we used to dance sometimes at Madame Carrichon's when she was in a good humour and the students were not too tired. There were some American girls who danced divinely, and they deigned to dance with me, so you need not be afraid."

"What do you mean?" retorted Richard, seeing she divined his hesitation.

"That you, very naturally, wished to ascertain whether I should disgrace you or not before you exposed yourself to such a terrible chance."

"Nonsense, my dear cousin!"

"Are you my cousin?" asked Andrée coolly; "I never seem to understand our relationship."

"Set a beggar on horseback," said Richard to himself. "Yes," he added aloud, "I don't think there is much doubt about it. Your father and mine were half-brothers."

"Then we are half-cousins," returned Andrée.

"Do you admit nothing nearer?" asked Richard, in an insinuating tone.

"It does not seem to me that relationship counts for much," she returned. "Relations are forced upon one by the accident of birth; friends are chosen."

"But relationship gives chances of intimate knowledge."

"Which often leads to dislike," concluded Andrée.

"You are a dangerous cynic, Andrée."

"We had better go back to your mother; she will be alone by this time, and a huge unknown crowd is a lonely wilderness."

"Often a howling one," returned Richard, offering his arm. "Tell me, what is your first impression of a well-bred English crowd?"

"I never saw a crowd of this kind before; I am greatly struck by the difference in the expression of faces here and in Paris. There is a kind of self-restrained composure here that conveys the idea, to me at least, of immense pride. The women are, on the whole, handsome; but I admire the men most."

"Indeed; I like your candour."

"Why should I not be candid? I admire them because they look more distinguished than any I have ever seen before, and they are so well dressed."

"Let me return thanks for my countrymen."

"They are mine too. I have always wished to be considered English."

Here they reached Mrs. Landon, who was alone, her laughter having left her again.

Most of the company had gone down to supper when Richard screwed up his courage to attempt a waltz with his cousin, and to his surprise found her an excellent partner—light and steady. He had almost given up dancing for the last year or two, but he had had large experience in the beginning of his social career, and had rarely met a better *danseuse*.

"You do credit to your American teachers," he said, when their dance was over and they walked towards the upper-room, whither Mrs. Landon had already gone escorted by one of the useful elderly men to be found at most London balls. Near the door they encountered Lady Sarah, alone for the moment.

"You have been dancing," she said. "Glad you have induced your cousin to do his duty, Miss Nugent. The boys of to-day try to be elderly before they are men. Mr. Landon is too young to be *blasé* yet. How do you like London, Miss Nugent?"

"I like it *better the more I know it*," said André;

"but one does not discover its attractions at once. There is something oppressive in its greatness."

"After all there is no town in the world quite like this but I should have thought a girl brought up in France would not have taken *in* London as you have done." Her ladyship continued to talk to her for some minutes rather to Richard's surprise, for she usually treated young unmarried nobodies with supreme disdain. He felt a degree of gratification at the manner in which Andrée acquitted herself that made him smile. There was no doubt his young Bohemian cousin was well bred, and for some reason or other had attracted the attention of his whimsical patroness.

Having put Andrée through her paces, Richard I don did not hesitate to introduce two or three of his acquaintances to her, and ultimately she returned home better pleased and more amused than she had expected to be. It was a new and a great experience. She would have written an account of it if she had had anyone to write it to, but she had not, nor was she guilty of keeping a diary; so she committed the details to memory's record office.

The ball afforded Emily matter for conversation and comment during many days, especially when Mrs. Kellett returned from her expedition to the seaside.

"The truth is, she had no invitation," whispered Emily to her cousin, with whom she had now grown more familiar. "I wonder why! She must be dreadfully out, for she was so proud of being asked to one of Lady Sarah's Thursdays. I wonder *why* she was not asked! I don't think her trip to the Isle of Wight did *her* much good; she looks quite pale and worn, with *such* dark marks under her eyes. The children are quite flourishing, but Mrs. Kellett——"

"No, she does not look well," returned Andrée, and dropped the subject, for her mind was much taken up by the letter she had received by the mid-day post from her mother and Maud Analy.

She had not written for a considerable time, and Andrée had become quite uneasy about her.

Maud had been an inmate of Madame Carrichon's establishment for nearly two years when the great change in Andrée's fortunes took place.

She was the daughter of a clergyman in the west of Ireland, and besides the necessity of earning her bread imposed upon her by scanty means, the gate of home was barred against her by, not an angel, but a stepmother with the flaming sword of a very bad temper, under which her mother was helpless.

A distant relative, who was also her godmother, had taken pity on her when she was about sixteen, and had taken her as a sort of humble assistant in a school which she kept in the suburbs of London, where Maud had remained till the establishment was broken up in consequence of the proprietress marrying the father of one of her pupils. After a short experience in another school, Maud came to the conclusion that without "French acquired in Paris" she should never command a tolerable position in her trying profession, so she contrived to scrape together the means of going to Madame Carrichon's, where she arrived with high hopes of finding numbers of pupils all eager to pay well for lessons in English.

A warm feeling of friendship quickly sprang up between the two waifs, and through the time of trial and privation which ensued Andrée was Maud's mainstay and comfort.

Through Madame Carrichon's good offices Maud did at a few *occasional lessons*, working hard at French all

the time, and music when she could get a chance of practising.

At last, when almost despairing of her future, an engagement offered in the family of an ecclesiastical dignitary, and Maud, her mercurial spirits rising rapidly at the first peep of blue in her cloudy skies, set forth, firmly believing that she was going to conquer fortune and make firm friends of her new employers.

At first she gave a glowing account of the house, the country, the elegance of the family generally, and the high rank of their acquaintances. In the next letter she found the place dull and the people hard, "though to be sure that is only the English way"; then, after a long silence, came the present brief epistle.

"DEAREST ANDRÉE: Will you take a little trouble for me?—yes! weren't you always an angel to help me! Now please go to the Scholastic Agency in Victoria Street, I forget the number, but it is near the Army and Navy Stores, and put down my name, mention all I can do, and add anything you can think of. I am really good in music, and you know all about my French. You may as well say I can undertake the rudiments of Latin, I used to teach it (out of a book, of course) at my poor dear godmother's, and I could get the same book again. Do the best you can for me, for here I'll not stay. These people are more than stony, they are just cut out of an iceberg, and they look down on me because I am Irish. Do *you* think I have a brogue? Mind, dear, you get me into a school, no more private families for me; I would rather take twenty pounds in a school, there's some life *there*, and you are not hung, like Mahomet's coffin, between the drawing-room and the kitchen. Get me something in London, *my dear, dear friend*. The very thought of seeing you

again makes my heart leap. Are you quite well and enjoying yourself? The world's your own if you would only let the past go, and there is no use living if you don't enjoy it. There's a curate here, a nice civil little nan, that manages somehow to meet me and the children pretty often when we are out walking; he makes me laugh, that's the only bit of life I have; but I'll tell you everything when we meet, which, please God, will be soon. As to the children, the girl and the youngest boy would be very well if I had them all to myself, and I could love them dearly, but Samuel, the other boy, is an imp of Satan; I'd like to——, but there's no use wishing for what you can't do. Write to me, dear, for I feel as if my heart would break; and mind you go to the agency soon; my fellow slavey at the hall told me it is a first-rate place. God bless you, my own dear Andrée. Hoping to be with you soon,

“I am your loving friend,

“MAUD ANALY.

“P. S.—Mind you go in your carriage (I suppose you have a carriage now), a ‘carriage recommendation’ always has a great effect.—M. A.”

This characteristic letter set Andrée thinking very seriously. There were certain difficulties always in dealing with Maud Analy, who was apt to act first and think afterwards, but she determined to do her utmost to find employment for the flighty, affectionate girl, who was not without a strata of more serious thought, only it was not easy to pierce the superincumbent rubbish that overlay it.



## CHAPTER VI.

### WANTED, A GOVERNESS.

ANDRÉE lost no time in replying to her friend's letter, promising heartily to do her best, and pointing out that Maud had totally omitted to mention when she would be free to enter on a fresh engagement.

Thinking that Mrs. Landon would be a more imposing person to make inquiries than herself, Andrée begged that lady to accompany her to the Scholastic Agency Office.

"Certainly, if you wish it, my dear; but I must warn you that if you are always ready to accept these kind of commissions your life will not be your own. I suppose you know this Miss Analy sufficiently well to recommend her?"

"Yes, Mrs. Landon. I lived in the same house with her for two years—nearly two years. She is kind, well-tempered, conscientious, and can, I believe, teach very successfully. Then she is poor and lonely."

"Very sweet of you to interest yourself in her, Andrée; but I would have you beware of these poor friends, they are apt to live upon those who feel for them; I am sure your uncle would tell you the same."

"I have no doubt he would," returned Andrée; "that is Mr. Landon's sentiment, not yours."

"Men know the world so much better than we do," said Mrs. Landon with a sigh.

"Better be ignorant of it than be deprived by suspicion of the luxury of helping a friend! You must cast aside your second-hand maxims of worldly wisdom and help me in this, dear Mrs. Landon."

And Andrée had her way. She generally had, for she was acquiring a great influence over her uncle's wife, who found in some way that existence was sweeter and less monotonous since the dreaded French cousin had become one of the family.

Then ensued that most dispiriting of occupations, seeking employment in an over-supplied branch of labour. It was terrible the miserable pittance offered, the amount of work demanded; above all the crowd of hungry competitors, eager to take any offer.

Andrée thought with something like awe of her sudden elevation over the carking cares of life, which had transformed her from a needy wretch subsisting upon charity, who would have grasped with both hands the chance of twenty pounds a year for eleven hours a day of oil! It was a duty as well as a joy to share some of her good fortune with her poorer sisters.

Finding Maud would not be free for a month (Mrs. Dean having stipulated for a monthly engagement, never imagining that the warning would come from her bond-lave) Andrée ventured to hold out for terms, and did not herefore succeed as quickly as she hoped in placing her friend. She quite longed to see Maud again and talk over their recollections of the Pension Carrichon, its passing storms of bad temper, its occasional hardships and short commons, and its bursts of sunshine and pleasure, which, thank heaven, always come "where two or three" young people "are gathered together,"—everything round her was so utterly strange, so little sympathetic.

"Andrée, would you like to go to Lady Sarah's next

Thursday?" asked Richard Landon one evening. He had come in unexpectedly after dinner and found his mother and Andrée *tête-à-tête*, for Emily had gone with some friends up the river, and Mr. Landon was in his study.

"No, thank you, Richard."

"Why?"

"I do not think it would give me any pleasure."

"Andrée could scarcely go alone," said Mrs. Landon.

"Oh, Lady Sarah said she might come with me early, and no one would know whether she had a chaperon or not. I wish you would come, Andrée. Lady Sarah seems most favourably impressed with you; she said you were well-bred, which is no small praise from *her*. She really wishes you to come."

"I am much obliged to her, but why should I go where I should be lonely and uncomfortable? I should not know anyone; I should only worry you, as you would be too polite to desert me."

"You are quite mistaken. You never bore me! You don't seem to see that if Lady Sarah took you up it would be a splendid start for you; she has great social influence."

"I do not care for her social influence, Richard. I have no ambition. In time I shall get to know the sort of people that suit me."

"You ought not to be without ambition. Would you be content with a dull life?"

"I hate dulness, and I do not intend to have a dull life; but my ideas of enjoyment are probably different from yours."

"And what am I to say as an excuse to Lady Sarah?"

"That I am very much obliged, and would rather stay at home. You will know how to put it."

*Richard* was evidently annoyed by her refusal, but did

ot deign to press her further. He cut short his visit, owever, and asked if his mother thought Mr. and Mrs. Kellett were at home.

Mrs. Landon thought Mrs. Kellett was, but Mr. Kellett was dining at some city banquet. Whereupon Richard aid good-night and departed.

"I am glad he does not neglect old friends," said his mother gently. "The Kelletts were very kind to Richard n former days, when he lived at home. They came to ive up here when their little boy was only a year old, and Richard, who was rather unsettled in his plans and not uite happy, used to be constantly with them. He has een much less restless since he made up his mind to be a arrister. I believe Lady Sarah's advice was good; she eally takes a great interest in him."

"She must be strong in most things, I imagine," returned Andrée; "but I confess she is to me rather alarming. I am not at all attracted to her."

"She is considered very clever and agreeable, I am old; my son has the highest possible esteem for her, and e ought to be grateful to her." Then, with a change of one, "Would it be convenient, my dear Andrée, for you o drive Emily and myself to St. John's Avenue to-morow? I want to call on some people there."

"Take the carriage by all means," returned Andrée; 'I have nothing to do out of doors to-morrow, and will only take a walk if I leave the house."

"Thank you. Then I shall pay several distant visits."

The following day was dull, with occasional drizzling rain, and Andrée enjoyed a long practice in her own room, which was large enough to accommodate a piano. She had quickly found that her wishes only needed expression to be fulfilled. *True, they were very modest and reason-*

able, nevertheless she had not ceased to wonder that all things seemed possible to her.

Richard Landon noticed with surprise and no small interest how thoroughly she had taken possession of her own life, how completely she seemed to know what she wanted. She was so quiet, so gentle in voice and manner, that it was startling to find a firm will in so soft a sheath.

In the afternoon, as Andrée was enjoying herself with the delightful society she found in the pages of a clever novel, she was informed that Mrs. Kellett was in the drawing-room, whither she reluctantly descended from the comfortable seclusion of her own room.

"So they are all out, Miss Nugent?" said her visitor. "I think it is rather unfriendly of you not to run in to me, instead of moping here alone."

"You are very kind, Mrs. Kellett. But I assure you I was not moping; I generally find work to do."

"Why, you'll work your fingers to the bone, my dear, and I am sure there is no need to do so."

"I do not mean needlework," said Andrée, with a pleasant smile, "though I like that too."

"I fear I am a sad idler by nature. I love talking and dawdling. If I were you I should enjoy myself—driving, dressing, going into society. I should not shut myself up as you do."

"I am fond of society too, I assure you, Mrs. Kellett; and as I come to know people, and find those I like, I daresay I shall go out more."

"Good Lord!" said Mrs. Kellett to herself, "she might be fifty to hear her talk." Then she remarked aloud, "I suppose London seems slow to you after Paris?"

Andrée shook her head. "I was always shut up in a *sort of school in Paris.*"

"Oh, that makes a difference. I believe they keep their young ladies very strictly in France. Well, some of them need it. I was going to see a young cousin of Mr. Kellett's to-day if it hadn't been such nasty weather. She is at school at Clapham, and, foolish child, has been caught corresponding with the music master. There has been a tremendous rumpus, for one of the governesses—a Frenchwoman—was found passing letters between them. The girl will have a good bit of money; her parents are in India, and her grandmother and me are supposed to look after her. The grandmother is away in Switzerland, so all the worry has come on me."

"How very annoying," said Andrée. "I am sorry for the mistress of the school; it may be no fault of hers, and yet may injure her seriously."

"Yes, I am sorry for them. Two sisters keep the school. They take no end of pains and trouble, now they are all upset. They wanted to expel Lizzy—that's the young monkey's name—but I have managed that matter. They sent off the Frenchwoman, and are short of a teacher; their holiday plans are upset, and I don't know what."

"Short of a teacher?" repeated Andrée, a sudden hope flashing into her heart. "Oh, Mrs. Kellett, would they take a girl I know? A good musician, who speaks and knows French well—a girl they could trust."

"I shouldn't wonder if they would; they'd be glad to keep all right with me, and——; but it's only an under-governess they want, and I don't fancy they give much of a salary."

"She will not get much salary anywhere," said Andrée. "I have been trying to find something for her in London, *and the remuneration is wretched*. Do, dear

Mrs. Kellett, take me to see these ladies; I do so want to have my friend near me."

"Oh, if she is such a friend of yours, and I speak for her, I daresay they will give her a chance, if they are not suited already."

"Then, Mrs. Kellett, if you are disengaged, will you drive down to Clapham to-morrow, and we will see what can be arranged. Miss Analy, the young lady I am so anxious about, will be free next week, and I should be very thankful if she had some place to go to at once."

"To-morrow? No, there is nothing on, I think. I shall be very pleased to go with you. We might start after luncheon."

"Thank you very much!" cried Andrée, her dark eyes lighting up with an unusual look of animation and pleasure.

"I am sure this young person ought to be very much obliged to you for the interest you take in her."

"She has been my chief companion for nearly two years," said Andrée.

"Must have been brought up among a low set," was Mrs. Kellett's mental comment.

"Your cousin was over with me last evening," she resumed aloud.

"My cousin!" repeated Andrée, who never thought of the Landons as relatives, and who was observing how very much better Mrs. Kellett was looking; her eyes were brighter, and had lost the restless, pained expression they had when she first returned from Ryde.

"Isn't Richard Landon your cousin?" asked Mrs. Kellett.

"Oh, yes; but I always forget it."

"Well, I don't think he is a cousin to be ashamed of! *He is quite a man of fashion, and moves in the best so-*

ciety; but I do wonder how he can put up with that Lady Sarah Temple. I don't think I ever met such a horrid, haughty, scornful, disagreeable old woman! I never intend to go near her again; I don't approve of such painted, made-up old creatures! She tries to make Richard as odious as herself. He was such a nice, quiet, steady young man when we moved in here about five years ago, now he is quite estranged from his family and old friends."

"I should hope not," said Andrée, rather surprised at the acrimony of her tone. "Mrs. Landon was saying last night that he was much attached to you and to Mr. Kellett, or something to that effect."

"*Did* she?" returned Mrs. Kellett, and paused as if in thought. "Ah, yes, Dick is a very nice fellow, only he doesn't think small potatoes of himself! nor of you either, I can tell you, Miss Nugent. He was saying to me last night that you were a very remarkable girl."

"Indeed!" said Andrée, laughing. "Then one may be remarkable in so many ways; I cannot be sure that it is a compliment or not."

"Of course it was a compliment; and I fancy they will see more of him at home now *you* are here!" Andrée looked as she felt, much surprised, as Mrs. Kellett uttered these words with a knowing nod, adding, "Dick Landon is not easily pleased. He used to confide in me a good deal, and none of you know him as well as I do."

"Very likely," said Andrée, in a tone of great indifference. "He can talk very well; but I am inclined to like Charlie best,—he is so like his mother."

"Oh dear! are you?" cried Mrs. Kellett; and then she talked on for some time of dress and parties, men and women, gossip, and a touch of scandal, frequently re-



verting to Richard Landon, and insinuating that he was immensely taken with his French cousin.

At last, to Andrée's relief, she took leave, promising to be ready the following day at two, when they were to start for their long drive to Clapham.

"I have given her something to think about, any way," mused Mrs. Kellett, as she crossed the garden to her own house, Andrée having politely escorted her through the conservatory to the steps which led into the path beneath. "What a pull money gives to a woman, to be sure! I wonder if that poor thing believes Dick would ever look at her were she moneyless! She is plain, and doesn't even know how to make the best of herself! No, he *couldn't* care a straw about *her*; only, as he says, 'It's as well not to lose a chance,' and he cannot wait for money till his father goes; he is likely to live these twenty years. I'd rather, if he *must* marry, he married that quiet, dull, plain Miss Nugent than any of the elegant, sweet-looking girls he was talking to at that horrid party of Lady Sarah's. Perhaps he'll make a lucky stroke on the Stock Exchange, and get on on his own funds."

The next day was fine, and Andrée went off in a state of unusual animation. To have anyone near her who in a way belonged to herself was infinitely cheering, and especially, to her nature, if that one was a creature to be helped and protected. She felt quite nervous lest the place she sought for her friend had been already filled. What should she do then? For Maud had given herself but a scanty margin of time to seek employment before she would be homeless, with only a couple of months' wage between her and destitution.

*That high-class educational establishment, Alton*

House, conducted by the Misses Jansen, presented its usual aspect of rigid propriety and perfect cleanliness when Mrs. Kellett and her new friend drove up to the gate on this memorable occasion. It was a large old mansion, behind a solid, conventual looking wall, overtopped by the branches of several large trees. The gate was large enough to admit a carriage, but on ringing only one half was opened, and the visitors crossed a gravel-sweep on foot.

The place was airy and cheerful, and a glass door at the opposite end of the entrance hall gave a glimpse of large grounds and some cedar-trees at the back. Much rubbing with beeswax and turpentine made the oaken floor and furniture shine refulgently, while the peace and unspotted purity of everything suggested no idea of the stormy episode which shattered for the moment the unhappy owner's belief in everyone and everything.

"I wish—oh! how I wish Maud Analy might come here," whispered Andrée to her companion. "It seems a delightful place!"

"It seems a regular gaol to me," returned Mrs. Kellett. They were ushered into a small but comfortable morning room at the back of the house, and while they waited Mrs. Kellett exclaimed in a suppressed tone, "Be sure you don't pretend to know anything about the rum-pus; you have only happened to hear that they want a governess to replace Mademoiselle." Andrée nodded, as an elderly young lady, in a black watered silk, rather elaborately made dress, and light hair slightly grey, braided behind her ears, whence depended two big ringlets, walked into the room with a stately step, and greeted Mrs. Kellett with dignified cordiality.

"And how is Lizzie Parker?" asked Mrs. Kellett. *Andrée fancied she saw the poor lady shrink.*

"Oh, very well; but you will come up and see her yourself?"

"Thank you, I will presently. First, my dear Miss Jansen, let me ask, have you found a governess yet?"

"No, I am sorry to say. We thought we had; but the references were not satisfactory."

"Then I think I have found you one, and the right sort of one," cried Mrs. Kellett, triumphantly. "Miss Nugent, who has been so good as to drive me down in her carriage to-day, is much interested in a young lady she has known for years, and, in short, she will tell you all about her, while I shall go and see my young cousin."

"We shall be glad to hear particulars," said Miss Jansen, bowing politely. "I shall summon my sister, and conduct Mrs. Kellett upstairs."

They left the room; and after a short absence, which to Andrée seemed very long, Miss Jansen—or, to be more correct, Miss Sophia Jansen—returned with her sister, an older, taller, and still more stately individual, who had hoisted a small lace cap, to inform the beholders that she had officially accepted elderliness.

"My sister, Miss Jansen. This young lady, Miss Nugent, thinks she can recommend us a French teacher who can also undertake the junior music pupils," said the younger of the sisters. Whereupon Andrée spoke. Her quiet earnestness impressed the worthy principals of Alton House, and before Mrs. Kellett rejoined them they had agreed to try Andrée's friend, at all events for three months, which would carry them over the holidays, as they had a couple of children among their inmates, who were to pass their vacation in school, and could not be left in the hands of servants. The salary offered was small enough, but, as Miss Jansen rather primly observed, not *lower than that usually given to young governesses.*

As these ladies were very anxious that Maud Analy should come as soon as possible, Andrée undertook that she should enter on her new engagement at once, and come direct from her present abode to Clapham. Miss Jansen noted her address carefully, and said she would write to the young lady by that afternoon's post.

Andrée was quite elated, and talked more eagerly to Mrs. Kellett on their way back than that lady thought she could. She had almost despaired of finding anything for her friend, and it would be so terrible for her to be alone and unprovided for in a great wilderness like London. Once she had a fair start, Andrée was quite sure Maud would prove herself capable and useful.

"I am sure you are a very good-natured girl," said Mrs. Kellett, who was not particularly interested; "I only hope you will not be imposed upon later on when you get your money into your own hands."

"I hope not, Mrs. Kellett; but one must risk something if you do not mean to wrap up your talent in a napkin, which, you know, we have high authority for considering unprofitable."

This was altogether a satisfactory week to Andrée. A couple of days after this unexpected success Mr. Landon announced that he had decided to grant his niece's request, and handed her a cheque for the amount she wished to send Madame Carrichon.

"Many, many thanks!" cried Andrée, gratefully, taking her own money. "You have made me quite happy. One thing only now remains, to find Mr. and Mrs. Thurston."

"I fear it is not so easy to do so, as you really have no clue to them. Should you like to advertise for them?"

"Well, no," said Andrée after a pause. "They might not care for me now, it is so long since we met, and per-

haps would not like to be claimed in so decided manner."

"I think you are right," returned Mr. Landon.

"But pray do not relax your search, for I do earnestly want to find them."

It need scarcely be said that Maud Analy wrote in the most glowing terms of gratitude to her friend. She did not know how to thank her enough. But then Andrée had always been the kindest, truest, wisest girl in the world! "You don't know how delighted I shall be to get out of this," she continued. "They don't like me. I have not enough starch to please them, and they look down upon me. Set them up! I am so glad I had not to ask leave to stay. I think Mrs. Dean is rather put out because I am going so soon. She counted on my not finding an engagement, and did not try to find a governess herself; now she will be left without one. What should I have done but for your kind loan! I should never have had the face to ask it! I could not believe my eyes when the beautiful crisp note fell out of your letter! I shall be able to buy one or two things I want now. And to think of being within an omnibus drive of you! I am sure I shall get on in this new place. I feel as if I must succeed there, and it will all be owing to you, dear. I shall travel up by the ten-thirty train, and reach St. Pancras at two. It is too good of you to come and meet me. What a comfort it will be to see your face!"

It was the first hour of real unalloyed pleasure which Andrée had tasted since the great change in her fortunes when she went to the station to receive her *protégée*, and saw the bright face, the dark grey eyes moist with gratitude and feeling, the tall, lithe figure, which had been so familiar to her during two rather trying years, come fly-

greet her from a third-class carriage, and felt her-  
 pressed in a warm embrace.

What a dear you are to come! It gives me new life  
 to see you, and know that you will be within  
 cried the impulsive girl. "You are looking ever  
 a better than when we parted; and what an ele-  
 gant and bonnet you have on! Are you wearing  
 or the dear, good soul that left you her money?  
 I think one ought to mourn in rose-colour for any-  
 thing that leaves you a fortune. Oh, life would be too  
 if one had money!"

Yes, money does help wonderfully; but here is the  
 carriage, and the porter with your luggage. You must  
 be hungry; I brought some sandwiches and cakes with  
 which you can eat them as we go along." Then to the  
 carriage— "To Alton House, Clapham; and drive  
 on."

And Analy was tall and slight, with the easy move-  
 ment which bespeaks a finely-moulded form; a sweet,  
 ; or scornful mouth, according to her mood;  
 fair skin, and abundant auburn hair—in short, a very  
 nice girl, with the air of a large generous nature,  
 highly imaginative and impressionable. She sat in  
 a state of great bliss, holding Andrée's hand in one of  
 her while the other carried supplies of cake and  
 pressed to her hungry young mouth, while at inter-  
 vals poured forth her tale of woes endured at the  
 ; the slights, the unconcealed indications of dis-  
 regard shown her by the elders of the family. "But there,  
 I couldn't like me no more than I could like them, so  
 I don't grumble. It was the awful loneliness, when  
 the children went downstairs after dinner, or went to bed,  
 I couldn't stand, and to feel that, once I had done  
 my work, no one cared to speak to me or see my face.

No, I will never go into a private family again!" Then she was greatly amazed at the crowded streets, uttering little shrieks of dismay at the close-shaving of their driver as they almost touched the wheels of omnibuses, or all but grazed the sides of huge waggons.

"What a wonderful place it is! I shall be afraid to go about in it by myself. Won't you come, Andrée dear, and help me to do a little shopping?—I want a new hat woefully! Why don't you wear a hat, Andrée? a bonnet looks so old!"

"I feel I suit a bonnet better," said Andrée; "a plain face looks plainer in a hat."

"Plain! Who says *you* are plain?"

"My glass," returned Andrée.

"Ah! to me it is the sweetest, best face *I* ever saw!"

"You are quite incapable of judging your friends," said Andrée, with a kindly smile. The slowest drive comes to an end sometime, and Alton House was reached far too soon for the friends.

"It is a beautiful place!" cried Maud; "I am sure I shall be happy here."

With many promises to write and to meet soon again they parted. Andrée drove home, marvelling at the sudden influx of light and life and hopefulness which this contact with the buoyant spirit of her young friend had conveyed to her own. "Surely the possession of such a nature is in itself equal to untold gold," thought the quiet heiress; "and though she is easily cast down, she rebounds with wonderful rapidity."

Before settling to regular work a blissful day was granted by the ladies of Alton House to their new *employée* for a little sight-seeing.

It was marked in Maud's memory by a visit to Westminster Abbey, to the Houses of Parliament, and by

an exciting drive round the park at the most crowded time.

Maud was profoundly affected by the music, by the solemn grandeur of the ancient abbey; and it was some little time after leaving it before she recovered her gaiety and lively flow of talk.

The parting moment came inexorably. Andrée accompanied her friend back to Clapham, and, with promises to meet again so soon as Andrée returned from the usual *leggiatura*, she left Maud, a smile upon her lips and ears dimming her eyes, waving adieu from the doorsteps of Alton House.



## CHAPTER VII.

### MAUD ANALY.

THE season was hurrying to its close; the days flew fast. Andrée gradually went into society and grew more interested in the people about her. She laid the blame of being frequently bored upon her own shoulders. Her upbringing had been so different from that of the people she was now thrown amongst,—familiarity with the grim realities of life, its poverty and meanness, its subterfuges and skeletons,—that she felt old of her years, and out of touch with the sleek, well-fed, prosperous citizens and citizenesses who formed “the Landon’s world.” Especially the young men of this class wearied her; they seemed so inane, so indifferent, with few exceptions so moulded on one block. When they danced well she was content, for with her ear and taste she enjoyed dancing, more indeed than her sprightly cousin Emily.

Here and there she met a man whose talk made her think, but on the whole Richard Landon was the most interesting person she had met; and, as Mrs. Kellett had predicted, his visits to Chichester Gardens grew more and more frequent. Sometimes he found time to take his cousin to a picture gallery, or accompany her and his sister to the theatre. This duty, however, was more frequently performed by Charlie, who had been kept extremely busy by his father, with whom he was not a *favourite*. The young man was not, indeed, of the Lan-

type. He was sunny in nature, and loved pleasure; in spite of her apparent gravity, Andrée liked him of the family after Mrs. Landon.

He had a good voice and enjoyed singing. This was great offence to his father, who considered such trifling unworthy a man of business. He found that Andrée led his accompaniments much better than Emily did, was always ready to oblige him. He therefore went of an evening less, finding his music at home when Landon retired to his study, as he usually did after supper.

‘Do you know where my mother thinks of going this summer?’ he asked one evening, when they happened to be alone together in the drawing-room.

‘No; I have heard her mention several places, Emily says Folkestone. Mrs. Kellett, it seems, is going there.’

Charlie made a gesture of disapprobation. ‘Why do we take Chichester Gardens with us to the seaside?’ he exclaimed; ‘we have rather a surfeit of Mrs. Kellett.’

‘I have noticed that you are not too fond of Mrs. Kellett.’

‘Well, no, I am not devoted to her.’

‘She is not a bad sort of little woman, Charlie; fond of excitement, but also very fond of her children. I wonder if she has any worry; she often looks ill and distressed. Her husband seems quite devoted to her.’

‘Oh, she is right enough! I don’t suppose she ever looks at all! But, Andrée, wouldn’t you like to go to the seaside? It’s very jolly I can tell you. You have never been out rowing? Well, I am not a bad oarsman, we might have great fun boating. Part of the vaca-

tion I am going to spend in Scotland, I want to do a short walking tour with a fellow I know; we went to Switzerland last year, *that* was jolly too."

"I should like to go to Switzerland myself," said Andrée. "But at present I should like to see something of England."

"Why don't you make them go to Wales, or Devonshire; they never think of going beyond the range of the South Eastern Railway; and you can do a great deal with my father?"

"I will try. When does Mrs. Landon generally go out of town?"

"The last week in July. Then the governor never stays much in the country, he hates it; runs down from Saturday to Monday. I don't know what he does in town, but it's a miserable time for him."

"I would rather go later myself," said Andrée in a thoughtful tone.

"Why?"

"There is a friend of mine who is a governess in a school at Clapham, who is obliged to stay there all through the vacation, and I should like to take her out sometimes, and go to see her. She is quite a stranger here, and very lonely."

"Poor beggar!" exclaimed Charlie.

"I wish you would not say that," cried Andrée; "it sounds so disrespectful, so contemptuous. My friend is no beggar; she gives full value for everything she gets, and is very charming."

"Then I wish you would ask her to come here. Charming people are few and far between."

"I wish I could ask her; she has no place to go to where she can escape school for half an hour."

"Why do you hesitate?"

"I don't like to trespass on your mother's kindness—in short, to take a liberty."

"Take a liberty! nonsense! Why should you not invite your friends here?"

"I have but one friend," said Andrée, as if to herself.

"What! don't you accept *me* as a friend, and my mother?"

"Yes, you have both been very nice, but I have not yet known you three months."

"Still, I hope you consider us the 'making' of friends."

"I think I do," returned Andrée deliberately; and after a moment of thought she added:

"Then, Charlie, I will beg your mother to ask Maud Analy here next Sunday."

"Are French girls generally like you, Andrée?" he asked abruptly.

"Why—I am not French."

"Somehow we all fancied you would be, and we haven't quite got rid of the fancy yet; though you speak a deuced deal better English than we do; but you are not quite like an English girl either, you give yourself the airs of an old woman."

"I feel old, Charlie."

"Oh, don't talk such rubbish! You are the sort that will grow younger with years. You don't know how to enjoy yourself."

"I do, in my own way; I believe I can enjoy very keenly."

"Well, Andrée, you try and persuade my mother and Emily to go to Devonshire, or Wales, or out of the way somewhere. Perhaps Richard may honour you with a visit. In August he generally goes to Templeton to shoot, *with a lot of swells*. I must say I should like to get a

little shooting myself; I may have a chance in Scotland."

"If your brother is such a favorite with Lady Sarah, why does he not make her invite you to join the party?"

"She wouldn't do it even if he asked her, and he would not ask. No! he will not share Lady Sarah with anyone."

"I do not understand why she prefers one brother so much above another."

"Nor I; it is a mystery," said Charlie, laughing, "how a fascinating young fellow like myself comes to be passed over! Come, will you be so kind as to let me try the second of that duett over again? I wish you sang."

"So do I, but I have really no voice. Call Emily, she is writing in the morning room."

"No, no, she has no ear; she sings so flat," and the singing recommenced.

Upon Charlie's suggestion Andrée asked Mrs. Landon if she would have any objection to ask Maud Analy to spend the following Sunday with them. Mrs. Landon hesitated for a moment, and then agreed readily enough. While she thought, although the master would not be pleased to have his sacred privacy disturbed by a stranger's presence, he would not like to offend his niece, so Mrs. Landon even went a step further, and said graciously, "Perhaps Miss Analy might like to come on the Saturday afternoon and return on Monday morning."

Andrée thanked her warmly for her kind thought, and wrote an explanatory and pressing note, offering to call for her friend on the next Saturday, to which she received a swift and rapturous acceptance.

The day previous to that on which Maud Analy was to pay her anticipated visit, Mrs. Landon, her daughter, and Andrée went to a fête in the Horticultural—a very

crowded and fashionable function. Andrée, who was looking forward to a delightful day with her friend, enjoyed the sunshine, the flowers, the brilliantly dressed crowd, and the music. The company was a good deal mixed. Emily and her mother met many acquaintances, while many stars of fashion and distinction were pointed out to Andrée, who was greatly amused and interested in watching the crowd and studying the aspect of the people.

Suddenly, to her great surprise, Richard Landon, whom she had not seen for some days, came up to speak to her, for he was rarely to be seen in the same places as his people. "I did not expect to see you," she exclaimed, smiling, and feeling pleased to recognize him.

"Why? am I not permitted to relax?"

"Certainly! I fancy you do relax, relax a good deal."

Richard turned to speak to his mother, casting a supercilious glance at two very smart, well-dressed young men who were conversing with Emily.

"Have you been in the great rose tent?"

"Yes; it is a dream of beauty."

"Then take me through it," said Richard, "I have seen nothing as yet." Andrée rose and sauntered with him towards the chief attraction, comparing him silently to the young men in whom his sister seemed to delight; they were inoffensive enough, yet there was a wide though almost indefinable difference between them and Richard Landon.

He was so composed, so quietly assured, his tone was so simple yet so refined and easy, that she perceived the immense distance between the men who thought about their manners and those whose manners came to them as naturally as the impulse to breathe.

Having made the tour of the tent and duly admired *its contents*, they emerged at the other side of it, and

came upon a group of men who were talking with an air of great deference with a highly-coloured lady who occupied a rustic chair in their midst and in the shade of the building, behind which the westering sun was beginning to sink. This lady wore a rich brocade of pink and black, adorned with jet, an airy black lace bonnet and pink feathers, and a costly mantle of filmy black lace, and Andrée recognized the still handsome face.

"Ah! here is Lady Sarah Temple," exclaimed Richard, raising his hat.

They were close upon her; she held out her hand to her favourite, and bowed to his companion. "Miss Nugent, I think," she said graciously, and Andrée felt obliged to approach her. "Come and sit down by me. You are the young lady who would not come to my Thursdays;" she spoke playfully, but Andrée felt the blood rise in her cheek. "I assure you people rather like coming," continued her ladyship, as Andrée took the chair which Richard brought her.

"I am sure they do," returned Andrée, her cheeks flushing; "but I am such a stranger, I feared to find myself alone in an unknown crowd."

"Are you shy and timid? You would have had your cousin to take care of you, and the people who come to me are easy to get on with. I am going out of town in a week, but next season you must come; you cannot hide away in Bayswater always."

"You are very good!" murmured Andrée, indefinitely.

"Oh, yes! I understand that. You are obstinate. And how do you like London?" I believe you have been chiefly brought up in Paris?"

"In some ways I like and admire London greatly."

"In which ways?"

"Its immensity; its crowd; the feeling of vivid life it conveys."

"Ah! but Paris is a lively place too."

"It is, but it is a sparkling stream; London is a mighty tide."

Lady Sarah looked at the speaker as if she would pierce her inmost soul, but Andrée spoke with a degree of soft composure that suggested self-respect.

"How do you get on with your people?" was Lady Sarah's next question, put with the abruptness by which she occasionally let people know that she felt herself a little above ordinary rules.

"I get on very well," returned Andrée, surprised.

"With your Cousin Richard too?"

"He is very nice and amiable to me, so they all are, but it is rather soon to know whether we really like each other or not."

Lady Sarah laughed. "You are a very prudent young lady," she said, "and I shall be pleased to see you at my house. You will all be leaving town soon; where do you think of going?"

"Mrs. Landon has not yet decided."

"You would like to return to the Continent, I suppose?"

"No; I want to see more of England; England is quite new to me, and I like it, so far."

"It seems to me that liking or disliking England is rather a test of character," observed Lady Sarah; and she continued to converse for a few minutes, Andrée feeling all the time that she was somehow under examination.

"Richard," exclaimed his patroness suddenly, "I am tired; I shall go; take Miss Nugent to her friends, and *return to put me into my brougham. Remember, Miss*



Nugent, I shall hope to see you next season; don't indulge in romantic ideas about dignified seclusion, and that sort of thing, we should all join in the scramble called society, or we lose the use of our faculties."

Andrée opened her eyes and laughed at the notion of any preference on her part for seclusion, but she only thanked Lady Sarah, and took the arm her cousin offered to conduct her to his mother.

"That is a naturally well-bred young woman," said Lady Sarah when Richard rejoined her, "and I suspect she has a backbone. I fancy it is worth your while to think of her; she has not, perhaps, as much money as you require, you ought to make sure about *that*, and you have exceptional means of finding out; then you are both nobodies; still, she might be a help to you if she were properly cultivated, but I am half afraid she might develop crotchets."

"Which would be a fatal drawback. Pray remember, dear Lady Sarah, that I have no abstract desire for matrimony."

"No man has; nor would any woman, only the scales are so heavily weighted on the other side. However, you have some time before you. Dine with me to-morrow. I shall be alone, and I want to talk to you about one or two matters."

Andrée found Maud Anely in a state of radiant expectancy when she reached Alton House on the appointed Saturday. She was ready dressed in her best frock, a pretty Paris "confection," but already a little *passée*, and a freshly-trimmed straw hat.

"You are a dear to be so punctual," was her greeting to Andrée. "I have been counting the minutes till you *came*. Your people are very kind to ask me. It is so *delightful* to get a peep beyond these walls."

"And are you comfortable here, Maud? Happier than at the Deanery?"

"Yes, ever so much; my worthy principals are very cold and stiff, but they seem just and are not unkind. The English governess is a sort of wooden woman, but she doesn't worry, and the girls are, as usual, good, bad, and indifferent. Try and find out, dear, if Miss Jansen is satisfied; she hopes to see you in the drawing-room, please go at once, then we can be off; I am dying to get away."

The interview with Miss Jansen was brief. Andrée was pleased that, on the whole, the report of Maud was favourable. "Miss Analy is certainly active and diligent. Her French is very good; but she is not quite so sedate as we could wish," was Miss Jansen's sentence.

"Perhaps the pupils will like her all the better."

"Perhaps so; but young people require to be impressed."

When Andrée rejoined her friend she condensed these observations into an assurance that Miss Jansen was very well pleased, and that Maud's position seemed very secure.

"Then I shall not trouble about anything, but just try to enjoy myself," was Maud's wise resolution.

"Are your relations very grand?" was her next query, when she had admired the common from the carriage window and exclaimed at the traffic, envied some people riding, and wondered what it would feel like to have money enough for everything.

"No," returned Andrée, "they are not effusive, and Mrs. Landon is very ladylike. They are more desperately respectable than grand. They would not think a woman who was content to live in a scramble like poor Madame Carrichon fit to sit at table with them; and yet life was not altogether bad with her."

"*Whatever was bad, you had the worst of it!*" ex-

claimed Maud. "She was as hard as nails to you! How heavenly it must be to be free of all that now; to be able to look forward without dread."

"I don't think you trouble much about the future, Maud."

"No; it would be madness of me to think of it; but it does flash across me sometimes, when I have a bad cold, which is the only sort of illness I am ever troubled with; then I see myself a white-haired, miserable old soul in the workhouse, ready to fawn on anyone for a 'screw of tea'; but 'more times,' as nurse used to say at home, I see myself in a beautiful house, or a pretty cottage, with an elegant husband who adores me. Thank heaven, *Andrée*, *you* are sure of the beautiful house, so it's not of much matter whether the husband comes or not."

"No! not much; that all one wants will be provided for, is always a great comfort. I am beginning to feel convinced on that head; but I am slow to enjoy, stupidly slow. It is, I think, because I have no one to share my enjoyment with," and she sighed. "I am glad to help anyone, of course, but abstract benevolence does not satisfy the heart. Now there is no one in the world I care to have with me always; no one that belongs to me. I really think I am fonder of *you* than anyone else."

"You are a dear; the dearest thing I ever knew!" cried Maud, squeezing her hand. "You will find a charming, sensible, clever husband somewhere, if there is any justice in life, which I doubt less than I used, since a fortune fell down from heaven on you! You and I *are* lonely enough, *Andrée*. I have the name of having a father and a home, but I have a step-mother who destroys both. I fancy men are awfully weak. Look at my *father*; he lets an ugly, disagreeable woman twist him round her finger; and I know he would like to be kind

to me. Then Mrs. Analy (who was a widow) has a son, Tony Beach, a great long lumbering creature; to hear him talk you would think he had the strength of a moral and intellectual Samson, and the will of a Bismarck; why, you have only to stand up to him, or laugh at him, and he collapses like an air ball after a pin prick. He used to fancy himself in love with me, and bothered my life out when I *did* go home. The only creature he ever imposed upon was his mother. I hope I shall never see any of them again. If I could have my poor father to myself! but I cannot."

Talking with open hearts of past and present the long drive to Chichester Gardens seemed short, and Andrée could almost fancy herself back in Paris again listening to Maud's outpourings, when they used to talk together after the lights were out, in the tiny chamber they shared—their only chance for an exchange of confidences.

"This is a grand house!" exclaimed Maud, as the carriage drew up at Mr. Landon's door. "What beautiful flowers and white steps! I do not feel half fine enough for such grandeur."

"Do not trouble about that," said Andrée.

Mrs. and Miss Landon were both out, so the friends had tea—a comfortable sit-down tea, whence they adjourned to Andrée's apartment.

Here Maud examined everything with deep interest and many exclamations.

"And you have a piano all to yourself! that is nice."

"Do you sing much now?" asked Andrée.

Maud shook her head. "No; I had no chance in the country. There was such a horrible instrument of torture in the schoolroom, and they did not like my songs in the drawing-room—they thought them shocking, so I sang no more. I do get an occasional half

hour for practice at Alton House. What a nice piece of pleasure-ground!" peeping through the window; "may you go there?"

"Yes; I often used to sit there in the evenings; but now I know most of the inhabitants someone always comes to talk to me."

"Andrée, dear, would it tire you to go out and look at the shops—I love shops!—and I want a little frilling. Then I have never been at Whiteley's."

"Whiteley's is closed on Saturday afternoon. Let us go into Kensington Gardens, the trees are so lovely there; as to frilling, I have plenty."

Andrée was amused by the frank amiability with which Maud met Mrs. Landon and her daughter, and even the cold solemn master of the house. She had made a careful toilette. Her pretty dress of becoming green, with a little trimming of black lace, which Andrée had helped to choose and make before they left Paris, suited her fair skin and rich auburn hair. Pleasure gave her a little more colour than usual, and a brighter sparkle to her speaking eyes. Maud was quite ready to believe that everyone liked her, till some indication of coldness or scorn struck her quick perception, when she was overwhelmed for a brief space, soon coming up smiling to the surface again. Charlie Landon was immensely struck with her sunny face, her pliant, graceful figure, and rather taken aback by the unhesitating manner with which she plunged into conversation with his unbending father, who did not altogether approve of her being invited to his house.

"We have been in Kensington Gardens," she began, smiling graciously into the rigid face turned towards her. "The trees are splendid; it is altogether charming. Do you ever walk there?"

"Never," returned Mr. Landon abruptly.

"And you so near!" exclaimed Maud, in a tone of passion. "I suppose you are always busy. It seems bad that the men who make the money have so little enjoyment of it. The women and children get all." Mr. Landon bent his head, but kept his lips closed; this young man did not know her place; she was no doubt some keen adventuress.

"The truth is, my father loves the mazes of the city a good deal better than the mazes of the woods," said Charlie, taking his parent's place, as Mr. Landon moved away and took shelter behind an evening paper.

"It is lucky to like one's business, whatever it is," said Maud, cheerfully. "To do what one does not like is really hard work."

"What is your favourite employment?" asked the young man, with an air of profound interest.

"I am fond of a good many things," said Maud, meditatively—"reading, and making my dresses, but singing is best of all."

"Oh, you sing! that is jolly! I sing a little myself; but perhaps you would condescend to try a duet with me over dinner?"

"I suspect the condescension would be on your side," returned, with a laugh that showed her regular white teeth. "I know very little about it; but I shall be very pleased to listen to you."

"I am sure I hope you will be when you hear me. My cousin," nodding over to Andrée, "plays very nicely, but does not sing."

"Yes, she does play well; we used to say in Paris that her soul was in the tips of her fingers when she put them on the keys."

"What a curious fragmentary soul she must have," said Charlie, with a good-humoured laugh.

"No; a soul isn't a piece of mosaic, made up of bits. Isn't it an all-pervading sort of ether?"

"You have the advantage of me; I have no ideas on the subject."

"Then you have never 'made your soul,' as we say in my country."

"And your country is——"

"Need you ask? I always expect that, like the faithless apostle, my 'speech betrayeth me.'"

"Yes; I perceived a musical touch about it. You are from the sister isle."

"Now that is very nicely said. I did not think an Englishman would find a pretty speech so readily."

"Have you the national dislike of the inferior brutal Saxon?"

"Not at all; I am a Protestant Hibernian, and you know we try to be as English as possible."

"Still——," but his further speech was arrested by the announcement of "Mr. Lorrimer," and an exceedingly well-dressed, automatic young man entered, and greeted his hostess and her family in a languid manner. No one introduced him to Maud, and immediately after dinner was announced.

Mr. Landon, as usual, gave his arm to Andrée, Lorrimer to Mrs. Landon, while Charlie divided himself between Miss Anally and his sister. Dinner went heavily. Mr. Landon and Lorrimer were too much for the natural sprightliness of Charlie and Maud. Andrée never took the lead in conversation, and the young people were thankful to escape to the drawing-room.

"It is so good of you to have asked me here," said *Maud*, bringing over a small, low ottoman beside Mrs.

Landon. "You don't know how happy it makes me to be with Andrée."

"Miss Nugent is, I am sure, very pleased to see you," returned Mrs. Landon coldly, with a faint emphasis on her niece's name.

"Does she want me to call her *Miss Nugent*?" thought Maud. "Well, I won't then!" She turned a smiling face to her hostess and replied, "I am sure she is! Andrée is the truest-hearted girl in the world; all the other girls at the Pension respected her; but I don't think she liked any of them so much as she liked me."

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Landon coldly.

"Wasn't her father Irish?" persisted Maud. "Nugent is an Irish name."

"No. Major Nugent's family came from the North of England, I think."

"Miss Analy," said Charlie, "will you try this duet with me? Andrée will play for us."

"Ah no! I cannot sing at sight. I am so sorry." And the young people gathered round the piano. Maud was easily persuaded to sing some ballads and a sparkling little French *café chantant* song, evidently full of fun, but unintelligible to all save Andrée. Her voice was mellow and remarkably true; it was also expressive, but it wanted training.

Mrs. Landon's drawing-room rarely witnessed so lively an evening. Even Mr. Lorrimer relaxed from his severe elegance, while Charlie abandoned himself to a flirtation with Maud of the most irrepressible description.

"If you do not take care," said Andrée, when she had conducted her friend to her room, "you will never be asked here again."

"Why? what have I done?" asked Maud, opening her eyes.



"You have flirted much too openly with the son of the house."

"And what harm?" cried Maud. "The poor young man must want something to cheer him up. Your remark is enough to chill the marrow in one's bones. He is grand that he thought it the height of presumption in a poor little teacher (little metaphorically) to speak with a man being spoken to. I understood it all. God help him! *He* is the most poverty-stricken of the two. As to Mrs. Landon, she is a marvel to be alive at all. I believe there is a spark of warmth left in her yet; if so, there must have been a pretty big fire once! Oh, dear Anne, how beautiful and spotless and abundant everything is here! And to think of hundreds of people living here without the least touch of poverty, or ugliness, or sordidness like these Landons, while you till just now, and I probably all my days, never knew anything but shabby and unsatisfied needs and useless wishes! Still, I would rather be myself, poor and faulty as I am, than change places with any of them. There is no knowing what may be hid in the future! Well, I have had a very happy time thanks to you, my own dear; and that will be a pleasant memory whatever happens. Nothing cheers one up more than a pleasant skirmish with a bright boy like your cousin of yours."

"Boy!" repeated Andrée. "Why, he is two or three years older than you are."

"But he does not know one half as much of the seamy side of life as I do. That is the sort of knowledge that ages."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### AN AUTUMN HOLIDAY.

MRS. LANDON'S idea of the inevitable "going out of town" was the reflection of her neighbours'.

A short journey to one of the south coast bathing places where the lodgings and necessities of life were good and abundant, with a band and a promenade and familiar forms parading thereon in proper seaside costumes for Emily, "reading-room" for Papa, boating and picnics for Charlie.

This was the "change" she had accepted for many a monotonous year. Now that Richard had suggested going "further a-field" she was half afraid of the innovation.

"It was such a long journey," she urged.

"And a very expensive one," added her husband.

"Then lodgings will probably be cheaper," suggested her son.

Finally it was decided that to Wales they should go, and, by the recommendation of a neighbour, that Beaumaris should be their headquarters, Charlie rather facilitating matters by offering to change his own and his friend's plans, and shift their pedestrian excursion from Jaledonia to Cambria.

Assured of her son's escort, Mrs. Landon made up her mind to face the enormous journey of six or seven hours, and about *ten days after* Maud's visit the party found

themselves settled in a pleasant cottage overlooking the sea and the opposite coast.

To Andrée, whose experience of the country was limited to the Bois de Boulogne and the sylvan shades of Meudon, the sea, the mountains, the delicious freshness of the briny air, made a new and hitherto undreamed-of world.

Nothing as yet had ever given her such keen delight. Her nature was essentially artistic and beauty-loving, and as she feasted her eyes on the varied loveliness of the scene, while the great slow-sailing clouds cast soft shadows and changing colours on sea and mountain, rocks and woods, she felt in some inexplicable way as if she had at last found her native land—the atmosphere most congenial to her inner life. She could sit and watch the sea for hours, and, inspired by this new influence, she tried to take up drawing, which she had neglected in London.

Andrée's education had been a thing of shreds and patches.

While at Madame Carrichon's she had picked up music from one *pensionnaire*, and drawing from another, having no time or opportunity to do much of either. Perhaps she had most aptitude for drawing; a correct eye and firm touch were hers, a gift from nature, and in the dim plans forming themselves in her mind a scheme of artistic study took a prominent place. Her mind was growing accustomed to the advantages of her position; the freedom and pleasure at her command were dawning upon her; the almost morbid regret, the sense of good fortune having come too late, was not vanishing, but shading off into delicate grey from the black distinctness of its first colouring: the brightness of her future waxed more and more unto the perfect day. Yet the happiness *she anticipated* was of a very tranquil order—peace and

riends, the means of seeing and learning, the power of applying the needs of some whose difficulties became known to her, the affection of a few intimates—an air castle of very moderate dimensions. The wings of Andrée's imagination had been closely clipped by the severe experience of her childhood, and her judgment was teadied by the consciousness that she was a plain girl, that the intoxicating incense of admiration could never be offered to her, or, if it were, could be but the dull fumes of the dross which is kindled by Mammon worship. Love, which always permeates youthful reverie, had no doubt its share in Andrée's, but it was love in a modified form.

With the distressful memories of her past one golden thread was interwoven—a memory which she looked back upon with the purest, most unselfish pleasure—it was the love story of her father's friend, John Thurston. Many scenes of that idyllic drama had been played under her eyes, and love was never presented to an awakening spirit in a fairer or more guileless form. How well she remembered the sudden change that seemed to pass over Thurston's somewhat rugged personality when he had made the acquaintance of the pale, pretty English governess who was sent home with Andrée one day—she had been suddenly seized with faintness at her aunt's, and objected to return with the lady's somewhat *farouche bonne*; the softness and brightness that came into both their faces, the happiness that gave music to their laughter, the tenderness both showed to herself, the worship of Lilly in his eyes. How quickly Andrée came to know they were all in all to each other! Why, it would have puzzled her to explain, but her knowledge had the sureness of instinct. And Lilly, as her friend was appropriately named, what a divinity *seemed to hedge her round*! What strange, sweet

atmosphere of joyous gentleness seemed to pervade the sordid, shabby little *appartement* where Lilly and her lover so often met! How Andrée loved them both! How she rejoiced with them! How the light seemed to die out of her life when the two went away together to buffet with the waves of the world!

It was very disappointing that she could not find them. Then, perhaps, they had ceased to care about her (Andrée). What was there in her that she should be remembered! Andrée was no moping sentimentalist. Though quite aware that she was plain, and rather exaggerating her plainness when she thought of it, she was not in the least depressed by the conviction. Even in her old poverty-stricken days she had found friendliness and ready companionship among the various frequenters of Madame Carrichon's Pension, nor can severer nor more unrelenting critics be found than girls from sixteen to twenty-one. So she knew she was not repulsive, at least to her own sex; as to men, she never imagined that anyone would fall in love with her; but for the present, at all events, she did not care or think about it. If she did not fall in love herself it was no matter.

Mrs. Landon and her party had not been many days settled in their seaside quarters when Emily, to her great joy, met some acquaintances from Bayswater—very slight acquaintances, but wealthy and desirable people, who had taken a villa with gardens and a tennis ground at some little distance, and with them she soon struck up an intimacy, which relieved Andrée considerably. Indeed, Andrée was ashamed of being so very much bored by Emily, who was quite an irreproachable young woman, but whose supreme commonplace and ingrained ignorance, in spite of an expensive education, made her quite uncompanionable to her cousin. Andrée, therefore, took a daughter's

place with her aunt, and that lady had never enjoyed an out-of-town season so much before; she was quite interested in Andrée's attempts to sketch, and thought her performances wonderful, much to the young artist's amusement.

One afternoon, as Andrée was trying to transfer a fine group of trees to her paper, in the woods of Llanmenai, a beautiful domain belonging to Sir Aylmer Beacham, the great man of the neighbourhood, she heard the sound of horses' feet approaching swiftly, and, gathering up her impedimenta, she withdrew to the bank beneath which she had been sitting, for the road was very narrow, when a low carriage, drawn by a pretty pair of ponies, came round an angle at some little distance. A lady in a large shady hat held the reins, and a small groom sat behind. To her surprise the sprightly little steeds were suddenly arrested within a few feet of her, and a voice she had heard before called "Miss Nugent! I am sure it must be Miss Nugent."

"Yes," returned Andrée, advancing, and recognizing Lady Sarah Temple, who was attired in the most correct seaside style, simply and somewhat youthfully.

"This is surprising!" exclaimed Lady Sarah. "How do *you* come here?"

"My aunt, Mrs. Landon, has taken a cottage here for a couple of months," said Andrée, smiling at her surprise.

"I thought your people never went further than Ramsgate or Brighton?—so Richard Landon says."

"Well, they have ventured further this season, Lady Sarah."

"And what are you doing? Sketching? Let me see your work."

"I am only trying my 'prentice hand; it is not worth looking at."

"Very probably; still, don't be shy," holding out her hand impatiently.

"I don't think I am," handing her drawing-block to her imperious ladyship, who looked at it critically, while the little groom held the impatient ponies. "Hum! yes, I see you are a beginner; but there are some nice touches here. Do you care much about this sort of thing?"

"It gives me great pleasure."

"Then go on with it by all means; it is not so easy to find pleasure," giving back the block.

"Is Richard here?"

"No; he has gone to Folkestone."

"Folkestone! Why?"

"I cannot tell."

"No, I suppose not. Folkestone is a horrid Cockney place."

"I cannot fancy any place horrid that is near the sea," said Andrée.

"Then the sea is a novelty to you?"

"Yes; I had never seen it, that I can remember, until I came over to England this spring."

"Indeed! I suppose—but these little brutes will not stand still; I wish you would pack up your artistic baggage and come and drive with me. It would be very kind of you to take pity on a desolate old woman!" added Lady Sarah, with her most fascinating manner—and she could be fascinating.

"Certainly, if you wish it," said Andrée with ready politeness, and finding it impossible to refuse a request so expressed.

She quickly put up her block and pencils, and took *her seat beside Lady Sarah.*

"When must you return? I suppose they do not let you wander about alone all day?"

"Oh, I am sure to be in at lunch-time."

"You ought not to go out alone; I shall speak to Mrs. Landon about it. You have a maid, of course? she ought to go out with you," continued Lady Sarah, flicking a fly from the ear of her off-side pony. "You had better come out and drive with me sometimes. It is rather a nuisance being here. I am staying at the Beachams—Lady B. is a relation of mine. She has no children, so he cultivates delicate health and lap-dogs. He is a brewer, or was a brewer, and the scent of the malthouse hangs round him, though he is not a bad sort of man. Sometimes they manage to gather a few pleasant people together, but this is a time of dearth in that line. Lady Beacham offered to lend me her *demoiselle de compagnie*, a very deplorable person; she seems afraid to speak to me, why I don't know. You are not afraid of me, Miss Eugent?"

"I don't think I am, Lady Sarah."

"No, why should you? I don't suppose you are afraid of anyone?"

"Perhaps not—yes; I used to be rather afraid of Madame Carrichon."

"Madame Carrichon! Who was she—any powerful person?"

"No, indeed; she is my mother's sister, and I lived with her."

"I understand. It must be delightful emancipation to be from her, with money in your purse, eh?"

"I am very thankful for it," said Andrée slowly; but I have not found life so *very* delightful since I have been out of reach of poor Madame Carrichon's scoldings."



"Indeed! Are the Landons not kind to you—*complaisant*?"

"I have nothing to complain of. I am growing quite fond of Mrs. Landon; but I doubt if I shall ever feel home in their house."

"Indeed! that is unfortunate, as I suppose you will have to live with them."

"Shall I not be quite free to choose my dwelling-place when I am of age?"

"Well, yes; but you cannot live alone."

"I know that."

"Then you have already formed plans?" said Lady Sarah quickly.

"Oh, no; only dreamed of them," returned Andrée and changed the subject by observing on the beauty of the view from the road where they were driving, thinking that she had said quite enough about herself. Perhaps Lady Sarah took the hint, for she followed her companion's lead and took the trouble to be very pleasant and amusing. Andrée enjoyed the drive; she had never known anyone like Lady Sarah before. She seemed to have seen everything worth seeing, and known everyone worth knowing. Her reading, too, must have been copious, and her talk was shrewd and epigrammatic.

"I have kept you out longer than I ought; I must now make these little creatures step out. You will be late for luncheon, Miss Nugent; you must lay the blame on my shoulders. I shall call on Mrs. Landon and apologize to-morrow." So saying she whipped up her ponies and rattled through the little town at a good pace, pulling sharp at the garden gate; while Emily and her brother gazed with astonished eyes from the dining-room window at the unexpected apparition of Lady Sarah Temple walking *Andrée* beside her.

A few words explained matters, and Mrs. Landon was mildly gratified by Lady Sarah's gracious message. Meantime that personage arrived considerably late for her hostess's luncheon, and found Lady Beacham, her companion, and Sir Aylmer with an elderly couple—relatives of his own—at table; Lady Beacham with sundry small bottles ranged before her, some to be taken before dinner, some to be swallowed after it. After a few words of excuse Lady Sarah applied herself to her food and did ample justice to the good things before her. Then she declared herself to be dead tired, and that she must go and lie down.

Before leaving the room she exclaimed to Lady Beacham, as if with a sudden thought:

"Oh, by the way, Alicia, I want to ask my young friend Richard Landon down here. I suppose you can put him up?"

"Yes, of course," returned the master of the house. "I remember meeting him at Templeton last year—a very intelligent young fellow."

"He has just brought out rather a clever brochure on our food supply; it will interest you, Sir Aylmer; I'll tell him to bring it for you. Don't trouble about me; I shall be occupied till tea-time, and then I think I shall walk."

After writing a few lines to Richard Landon, her ladyship's occupation consisted in sleeping soundly—an unusual thing with her. Indeed, she considered the inclination and opportunity for sleep one of the advantages of a visit to the seaside and one of the attractions of Llanmenai.

Emily Landon was quite excited by the triumphal return of Andrée in Lady Sarah's pony carriage. It was a decided distinction, to be properly paraded before her

Bayswater acquaintances, and she thought Andrée rather dull and ignorant because she had so little to say about it. When the afternoon post came and brought a letter from Maud, Andrée seemed to forget that any Lady Sarah had ever existed, and carried the missive away with her to read on the seashore. Thither Charlie accompanied her, and managed to extract some information respecting her fair correspondent; they talked confidentially, with many a break, until the young man found himself much too late for tennis with his sister's friends, and so proposed to take his mother and Andrée for a row, as the sea was smooth as glass.

Lady Sarah was as good as her word, and paid Mrs. Landon her promised visit the following day.

She was imperiously gracious, and finally carried off Andrée to drive with her. "You are really quite a rational being, Miss Nugent," she said, with her usual insolent frankness. "I should not mind introducing you next spring, and if you choose to take a place in society, I might present you."

"You are very kind, Lady Sarah; but I should much prefer not being presented, and I do not care to go to a great number of parties."

"What!" cried Lady Sarah. "Have you no ambition? Would you be content to marry a nobody?"

"Yes," smiling, "if I liked him, and the nobody liked me."

"Perhaps you have found the particular nobody?" fixing her piercing eyes upon Andrée, who shook her head.

"No, indeed; nor am I likely to find him. I shall not be in a hurry to share what is mine with anyone, especially as I am well aware I possess very little of what men *consider attractive*."

Lady Sarah again looked keenly at her.

"If you had one shoulder higher than the other and a strong squint, you might think and speak in that strain; as it is, there is no reason why you should not be charming."

Andrée laughed good-humouredly, and thanked her.

"Moreover," continued Lady Sarah hastily, for she was nettled by Andrée's indifference, "I know *one* believer in my doctrine. He has told me so himself!"

Andrée opened her eyes wide, and a faint colour came into her cheeks. There could be but one man who could have made such a confidence to her interlocutor. "If I had heard it myself I should have doubted, but as *you* say so, it must be true," she returned.

Lady Sarah took the rebuke in good part; but feeling she had ventured far enough on delicate ground she changed the subject, nor did she ever again revert to it.

A few days later, as Andrée was returning from a favourite haunt of hers among the rocks where she had been reading, and half afraid she might be late for dinner, she was startled at meeting Richard Landon face to face as she turned an angle in the path.

"Richard!" was all she could say.

"I suppose you are a little surprised to see me," he returned, shaking hands with her more cordially than usual. "I do not generally care to migrate with the patriarchal company; but this year the spirit moved me to come, and while I pondered whether I should break my rule or not, there came an amiable invitation from Sir Aylmer Beacham, and here I am. I was staying in Cheshire, so I got here early. I found no one at home, and wandered on in search of you."

He turned with her, and they retraced their steps to the house, *talking confidentially*. Andrée found herself

describing her life since they parted almost unconsciously Richard made her the sole subject of conversation by courteous questions and a tone of deep, quiet interest, Andrée felt how sweet it was to be thought of and valued.

"I wonder Lady Sarah did not say I was coming, it was rather a sudden thought."

"And we have not seen her for two or three days," replied Andrée. "She has been most amiable, has called upon your mother, and taken me to drive with her several times. At first it was rather a fearful joy, but I have always felt that it would never do to show the smallest alarm to her ladyship, so I soon ceased to feel it."

"No. I must admit that my good friend is rather tyrant, with a dash of the bully. Shameful of me to do so, isn't it? But you are very safe, I feel sure."

"I hope so, Richard. Now I rather enjoy being Lady Sarah; no one amuses me so much. She appears to me to have seen and known everything and everything. But she is terribly cynical. Does she really believe all dreary doctrines?"

"It is hard to say. A good deal depends on her temper. She really has had everything a good deal too much in her own way."

"Yes; I suppose that is unhealthy, though pleasant."

"Yet, Andrée, I do not think it would have spoiled you. You are so desperately sensible."

"It remains to be seen how I stand the test," returned rather drily; "I seem to have all I can possibly want."

"Your ambition then must be easily satisfied."

"What lack I yet?" asked Andrée, looking up to him with a smile.

"Oh, social success; a high and secure position in a distinguished circle of friends, or the nearest approach

them—acquaintances; a house, to which everyone is eager to have the *entrée*; a——”

“Hold, enough! the mere enumeration of such glories appalls me. Imagine issuing from the lowly depths of poor Madame Carrichon’s Pension and soaring to such heights! No, Richard! My wings were clipped too early; they will never grow again.”

“You should forget these painful passages, my dear cousin. Wipe them from the tablets of your memory.”

“I do not wish to wipe them out,” she said in a low tone. These words brought them to the door of Mrs. Landon’s abode, and put an end to their conversation.

“No one has returned,” said Andrée, coming back to the sitting-room after a peep into her aunt’s bed-chamber.

“Then I must leave you. I dare not venture to dine out the day I arrive, but I will come down to-morrow early, and see if we cannot plan some excursion.”

“Will not Lady Sarah claim you as her own?”

“Do you think I shall admit the claim?”

“Yes; I think it probable. She is so great a friend of yours, perhaps you ought!”

“We’ll see. To-morrow, then, between ten and eleven. Welsh air seems to agree with you, Andrée; you are looking a new creature.”

The presence of Richard gave great animation to the remainder of his family’s stay at the seaside. True, it was a little counterbalanced by Mr. Landon’s arrival for his usual three weeks’ nominal holiday, to him the most wearisome portion of the year. To none of the party was the neighbourhood of Lady Sarah Temple of so much value. She called, she sent for him, she drove him about (for when she was at Llanmenai carriages, horses, ponies, phaetons, ceased to belong to their rightful owners); she com-

forted his soul by discussing her legal affairs, her in-  
ments, the iniquities of her tenants, and extracted ex-  
advice and suggestions from him, fearless of six  
eightpences or three-and-fourpences.

Charlie had started on his walking tour soon  
Richard's arrival, because, as he informed André  
hadn't a chance of exchanging a word with her now  
"The Counsellor" had descended on them. "The  
he gives himself are quite intolerable," he added.  
considers no one up to his intellectual standard. I  
you would give me Miss Analy's address, I want to  
to her to describe your abominable conduct, and the le-  
less way in which you have cut me."

"You shall certainly not get it!" said Andrée, li-  
ing.

Lady Beacham and suite, consisting of three dog-  
a much-enduring lady companion, called and left.  
She also invited the whole party to one of the large  
den parties which she was in the habit of giving to  
neighbouring "county people," to Emily Landon's  
and joy. Such distinction quite counterbalanced  
superior villa and grounds, the various gentlemen vi-  
from London, and even their Jew stockbroker fri-  
yacht, which had lifted her Bayswater acquaintanc-  
far above her humbler self.

The party bored her, however. She felt eclipsed  
the very simple costumes of the county young ladies.  
some inexplicable way, and she did not know what  
to the young men who were introduced to her, nor  
she understand the topics on which they discor-  
Nevertheless, the great fact remained, that of all the  
mer visitors she and her people were the only indivi-  
invited to Llanmenai.

*The day after this fête Lady Sarah called to say*

to Mrs. Landon, and take Andrée for a short drive. "I am going on to Yorkshire," said her ladyship, as they left the houses and villas behind. "I am going to stay with my daughter, Lady Mowbray. It is a horrid bore; she is considered a sweet woman, but is really rather stupid. She has six children. Imagine *what a corvé!* and I am supposed to be deeply interested in them. Horrid little bores, they all want to climb into my lap at once. They tear my lace and rummage my pockets, while their mother scolds them in tones that really say, 'What sweet, clever, amusing creatures they are!' She lives in an *entourage* of nurses and governesses, and is hideously imposed upon by them all. Then the house is a sort of happy hunting-ground for all the curates in the county, who quite eat her up with charities, and treats, and heaven knows what. No wonder that decent, companionable people will never go to her. However, I shall only stay a week. I must go on to my own place, Templeton; I expect a shooting party there on the 11th. Your cousin is coming to me. Would you like to come? It would help to break you in, and Richard could look after you."

"Thank you, Lady Sarah; I really would rather not. This sounds ungrateful, but I do not the less appreciate your kindness."

"You are wrong," said Lady Sarah dispassionately. "The sooner you see something of the society you would, I suppose, wish to live amongst the better. Pray do you intend to live in Bayswater atmosphere for ever? You will soon be fit for no other."

"I don't think I should like to live always in Bayswater. In fact, I can make no plan of life till I have seen more, and before I settle I wish to see something of the Continent."

"You are very obstinate," retorted Lady Sarah.



This little sparring match did not, however, prevent them from parting very good friends, and Andrée promised to go and see her in town readily enough.

Richard Landon had previously removed to the hotel, as he announced his intention of staying a few days longer, and Andrée was half surprised to find how completely he absorbed her. He seemed to consider it his duty and his right to carry her camp-stool when she went to sketch; to take her out rowing, boating, driving. No one ever interfered with him, nor did Andrée care to resist. Now that Charlie was away he was much the most companionable of the party; he was well-informed, and knew how to talk, so Andrée enjoyed his society, and liked to sharpen her wits against his. It sometimes occurred to her, however, especially when she had grown eager and warm on any subject, that she was playing her gold against his counters, and nothing abstract had the least real interest for him; that his convictions appertained only to material things; and that principles, patriotism, religious sacrifice, were merely tinkling cymbals wherewith to amuse and magnetize the crowd, whose little weaknesses and superstitions supplied the ladder up which the dexterous manipulator might climb to fortune, power, fame. She resisted the impression, however, not believing herself qualified to judge, but it would return again and again. This did not interfere with the friendliness of their intercourse, and certainly Richard did not seem to find his cousin's company a bore.

"Have you any letters for the post, mother?" he asked one evening after dinner, as he observed she was writing.

"Yes, I have two ready," and she held them out.

"'Mrs. Kellett,'" he read, looking at the addresses. "What are you writing to her for?"

"I had a note from her this morning asking me to

ake her in for a couple of days. They are at home now, and she says she is rather tired out, as nurse was away while they were at Folkestone, and the governess not much help; now nurse *is* at home, and Mrs. Kellett can save."

Richard made no reply. He took the letters and left the room.

At breakfast next morning his "mail" was, as usual, the heaviest, and he was occupied with his letters for some time, looking rather serious; then his brow cleared, and as he put them up together he said to Mrs. Landon:

"Lady Sarah has reached Templeton, to her great joy. She wants me to join her on Monday, as she wishes to look into some matters connected with the estate before her guests assemble."

"Must you go, Richard?"

"Yes; I do not see how I could refuse."

"I am sorry, for Mrs. Kellett will arrive on Tuesday."

"Oh, you will have an excellent substitute in Charlie," adding to his brother, who had joined them a few days before; "he is much the best man of the two for organising picnics and excursions, is he not, Andrée?"

"Perhaps so," she returned. "He takes more trouble about things."

"You have gained nothing by fishing," observed Charlie, and no more was said.

The rest of the day went swiftly, as Charlie took up his former position as Andrée's squire—carried her sketch-book and camp-stool, and talked gaily of his adventures and mishaps during his ramble through the more mountainous parts of the Principality; and Andrée, for some occult reason, found that she felt more at home and at ease with him than with his more cultivated brother.

"Don't go to church this evening," said Richard the day before he was going to leave. "Come with me, and let us do our worshipping among the rocks or the woods. I want to look at that fine view over sea and mountain once more."

"Very well, Richard. Then we had better go up to the woods; it is very clear after this morning's rain."

At first Andrée found her cousin rather silent and preoccupied, but by the time they had done half the distance he was himself again, and speaking of Lady Sarah's invitation to Andrée, of which she had evidently told him. "I wish you had accepted it. Why do you resist my good old friend's advances? They are flattering from her, I assure you. Do you object to be patronized?"

"No; not by a woman so much older than myself. I do not think I should be happy or comfortable shut up with a crowd of strangers whose shibboleth is unknown to me."

"Perhaps you are right. You have certainly very clear ideas as to what you want and wish."

A little further they reached an opening in the trees, where a rustic bench had been placed, that those who had climbed so far might enjoy the view at their ease, as Andrée and her companion now did for some minutes in silence.

"It is indeed lovely," she said at last; "the sky is splendid, is it not?" turning to Richard, who had not answered.

"It is," he returned shortly. Then, shifting his position, he leant his arm on the back of the seat, drawing a little nearer to her. "I cannot think of Nature's beauties just now," he said, smiling pleasantly; "I want to talk to you about a matter of great importance to me."

"Do you?" exclaimed Andrée, much surprised.

"You cannot want advice from so very inexperienced a person as I am."

"Hear me and judge. How long is it since I first met you—not more than four months?" Andrée bent her head. "And you did not like me at first, or, perhaps, at last either, though we have grown rather friendly?"

"In truth I did not like any one at first," she said gently. "I was morbid, and a little bewildered by the great change in my fortunes, in my life. I have always been very lonely, but when I arrived in England I felt utterly desolate. There are many things money cannot buy."

"Indeed! I should say very few; but I do not want to argue that or any other point with you. I want to tell you that if you did not like me I very soon grew to like you. I have found you the most companionable woman I have ever known, the most reasonable; if you could agree to make life's journey with me you would make me *very* happy, Andrée, and I think we might enjoy much together. Don't look so surprised; is it possible you have not seen that your presence gives me the keenest pleasure?"

"No," said Andrée, who found it difficult to express herself, so great was her amazement. "It never crossed my mind that you thought of me—in—in this way."

"But now that I have told you do you feel inclined to listen to my pleading? There is a sort of steady composure about you which compels me to express myself with moderation; but, Andrée, I love you sincerely."

"It is very strange," she replied. "I do not seem able to believe it. At all events, Richard, I cannot say I love you, and at *present* I have not the slightest wish or inten-

tion to marry. I rather shrink from the idea, not unnaturally, you will allow," and her colour deepened.

"I understand. Like many women with money you will let the chances of happiness slip from your grasp because you imagine men are mercenary. Forgive me if I remind you that your fortune is not colossal, and that it is not difficult to find girls with many advantages besides money in London society."

"While I have only money, and not too much of that," returned Andrée with a quiet smile. "Well, Richard, I am quite willing to believe you disinterested, and I am grateful for your flattering opinion; but I shall certainly not marry anyone, if ever I do, until I am of age, and until I have tried an independent life. Besides, I do not believe you and I would make what is called a happy couple."

"You have quite made up your mind?"

"Quite."

"And when shall you be of age?"

"In little more than a year."

"Then in that time I shall try and induce you to change."

"I hope you will not," she interrupted earnestly. "If you do, I shall only lose a pleasant acquaintance, and gain nothing to replace it. Let us forget this startling passage, and be at ease again. Promise me this."

Richard Landon thought for a moment, and then said with sudden decision: "I accept your terms for a year and a day, beyond that I make no promise, though I may probably never offend again."

"Thank you, Richard; and no one need ever know of this—conversation."

"I am not likely to speak of it," he replied with a *somewhat* cynical smile. "Shall we retrace our steps?"

If I do not straightway rush down this steep place and perish in the waters, like the Biblical swine, don't suppose I am not cruelly disappointed. Since I came down here I have ventured to hope ; but there ! I am to return to the coolest terms of friendship, and you shall have no reason to complain of my disobedience."

## CHAPTER IX.

### TREASURE TROVE.

ANDRÉE greatly admired Richard's self-possession; he showed no sign of being a rejected suitor. Indeed, he made himself more generally agreeable than usual, and, moreover, did justice to the cold supper which was a Sabbath observance in the Landon family. But he bid his people good-bye before going back to his hotel, as he intended to start at some unearthly hour in the morning.

Andrée rejoiced at this, and soon the impression his avowal had made upon her faded away.

He did not really love her. It was most improbable that a man accustomed to the brilliant women he was in the habit of meeting should care for a plain, unaccomplished girl like herself. No! he and his father did not wish to let the money they had at one time counted on go out of the family. She did not feel in the least indignant, however. Richard had treated her with respect, and had mocked her with no ardent love-making; he would find someone with more money and "other advantages" than herself, and this episode would pass out of both their minds.

The day after Richard's departure Mrs. Kellett arrived, in quite a killing costume and a face full of smiles and sunshine. Andrée happened to be standing opposite her when Emily announced that Richard had gone to *Templeton*, and was almost painfully struck by the look

of disappointment—almost of despair—which cast a sudden gloom over her countenance.

“Well, he is really too bad!” she exclaimed, with a curious little forced laugh. “Why, he told me that he did not think he would go to Lady Sarah’s till quite the end of August or beginning of September.”

“This is the 27th of August,” said Mrs. Landon. “I think he had a letter from Lady Sarah Temple asking him to come a little sooner.”

“What a tiresome, whimsical, selfish old thing she is,” cried Mrs. Kellett. “I am sure I am glad she is not here now.” Then she declared herself quite tired out with her journey, and asked to be taken to her room.

When she reappeared she was more like herself, and irritated rather noisily with Charlie; but the visit was a failure, and when she had been Mrs. Landon’s guest for three days she declared herself dissatisfied with nurse’s account of her darling Ethel, and departed forthwith to her London home, somewhat to Andrée’s relief, as the little woman rather fastened herself on the French cousin, as she usually termed her.

Andrée was not sorry to find herself in town again. The weather had broken, and long dark evenings in country lodgings are not exhilarating.

Then she longed to see Maud, who was the only person for whom she felt warm affection—rendered all the warmer by the consciousness that she was a creature to be helped and protected.

As soon as she settled herself for the winter and resumed the use of her carriage, she drove on a Saturday afternoon, when she knew that Maud would be comparatively free, to Alton House, and found her friend in a state of great excitement and expectancy.

“I haven’t known whether I was on my head or my



heels since I had your note," cried Maud, after a storm of kisses. "What ages you were away! and having so little to do made it seem longer still. You are looking quite well and brown; had you a nice time?"

"A very nice time indeed; and you? how have you been going on?"

"Very well on the whole. I really have nothing to complain of. I fancy Miss Jansen begins to believe I am not so flighty as I seemed at first. They—the sisters—are not bad old souls. I like some of the girls too, and they like me. You have brought me luck, Andrée! How are the cousins, and their terrible old squaretoes of a father? He is a most oppressive old gentleman. Surely you will not go on living with him all the days of your life?"

"Certainly not!" returned Andrée with decision. "I have many plans in my head. Chiefly I want to travel; but I have nearly a year before me to plan things. When can you come to spend a day with me?"

"Not for some little time. There is so much to do at the beginning of the term; besides——"

Here Maud was interrupted by the entrance of a little girl—a fair, delicate-looking child of perhaps five years old, with a quantity of pale golden hair and big angelic-looking blue eyes. She paused on seeing a stranger, her pale cheeks flushing quickly.

"Come here, my sweet," cried Maud, holding out her hand—"come here and speak to this nice lady, she's your Auntie Maud's great friend." The little thing drew nearer, offered a timid hand to Andrée, and then retreated to Maud, who took her on her lap.

"She is not really your niece?" asked Andrée, looking kindly at the child, whose wistful blue eyes seemed *familiar to her*.

"Oh, no, but she is my pet; are you not, Lilly? She came here in the holidays, and I had the special charge of her; she is a good little girl." The child smiled a happy smile and nestled against Maud's shoulder. Then recognizing that Andrée was a friend, too, she asked, "Where is my big book of fairy tales that father sent me for my birthday? It is not in your room."

"I think you lent it to Edith; go and ask her; and stay in the schoolroom, dear, it is too damp to go out. I will come and help to dress your doll by-and-by."

The child slipped down from her lap and went away.

"That is the sweetest little soul!" exclaimed Maud. "She is motherless, and I might say fatherless, for the father is always away; but she never forgets him. She was living with some friend or relative, who married rather unexpectedly and went to India or somewhere, so she is sent here."

"She is like a Lilly I once knew," said Andrée, with a dreamy look in her eyes. "Her face seemed familiar to me at first, and when you said her name I remembered why. What is her other name?"

"Thurston—Lilly Thurston."

"Ah!" cried Andrée, her dark eyes lighting up with eagerness and pleasure; "then she must be the child of my dear old friends that I have almost despaired of finding. But you say she is motherless! How has John Thurston borne his life without Lilly!—the Lilly I knew!" Tears rose and hung on her black lashes as the picture of her loves flashed across her mental vision.

"I suppose, at first, for the sake of this Lilly, and then, no doubt, life grew upon him. Life is so attractive even when it is miserable."

"You must give me his address, Maud. You do not know how *delighted* I am to find him. It—only it *dear*

sweet Lilly were here too! I should be able to make a home then near them."

"You must ask Miss Jansen, Andrée; I do not know it."

"How I should love to have that dear little girl with me sometimes, Maud. Is school not too rough for so tender a child?"

"Oh, no. Everyone likes her, even the rough ones, and it is much more healthy for her to be among a number of young creatures (we have two or three of seven and eight) than to be petted and made a hothouse plant of by grown people in a private family."

"Perhaps so," said Andrée, with a far-away look.

"Does she remember her mother?" she continued after a pause.

"I think not; I believe she was a mere baby when Mrs. Thurston died."

"Call her back, Maud; I want to look at her again."

And Lilly returned, but in bitter tears. She had found her favourite doll, a beautiful creation, had been forgotten on the floor, and in shifting some furniture from one room to the other, a heavy chair had fallen on its fair waxen face, and crushed it out of all shape and human semblance.

How glad Andrée was to take the child in her arms, and comfort her—to obtain leave from Miss Jansen to take her out with Maud and search for an equally charming Dolly among the treasures of Clapham's only toy-shop. Lilly was pleased and grateful; but Andrée observed that her heart still clung to her battered favourite, and that the new beauty could not make her forget the crushed wreck.

This little incident enabled her to learn some particulars respecting her long-lost friend, as Miss Jansen was

quite willing to impart all she knew to Mrs. Kellett's distinguished acquaintance.

That lady had never seen Mr. Thurston, who was war correspondent to one of the morning papers. He was in Egypt at present, and no one knew when he would return. All payments were made to Miss Jansen by Mr. Thurston's solicitor, whose wife came occasionally to see Lilly, and sent reports to her father. Miss Jansen herself wrote to him every fortnight. She must say Mr. Thurston's replies were models of fatherly affection and composition. She (Miss Jansen) was very pleased to find that the dear child had so eligible an acquaintance as Miss Nugent, who should have every access to her. Yes, of course she would write down Mr. Thurston's address. He would, no doubt, be delighted to hear about his little girl from an old friend of the child's mother.

Andrée prolonged her visit, and finally reached Chichester Gardens a little late for dinner—a mortal offence. But she was lifted over such considerations by the mingled emotions of the day. That she should have discovered her old friend was delightful, but the grief of finding that her dear girl companion whom she had loved and idealized, had escaped from the sorrows, the joys, the love of earth, was true and keen. Never again should she look into those sweet, heavenly blue eyes; never again touch the slender, almost transparent hand she used to admire so much. Poor John Thurston! What deep waters must have gone over his soul!

"Pray excuse me for being so late," she said to her aunt courteously, "but I was fortunate in finding the little girl of some old friends at Alton House, and I forgot the time in hearing all about them. You remember, Mr. Landon, that I asked you to make some inquiries about a Mr. Thurston?"

"I do ; and as yet without any result, I regret to say," returned Mr. Landon.

"Then I need trouble you no more, for this little girl is his daughter, and I have his address."

"Indeed !" said Mrs. Landon with some interest ; "I am glad you have found your friends at last."

Andrée did not continue the subject ; she felt that she could not describe the death of Lilly to such indifferent listeners, and the conversation drifted in another direction.

After dinner Richard surprised them by a visit. He had not appeared before since their return to town, and now he watched somewhat eagerly how Andrée would receive him, though his manner was as quiet and composed as ever. If he expected any signs of consciousness in his cousin he was greatly disappointed. She had forgotten all about his declaration in the excitement of her "treasure trove" at Clapham, and greeted him with friendly cordiality, which surprised him, so evident was it that she had ceased to remember he had aspired to be her lover. Something else, he perceived, occupied her mind. Had he a rival ? No ! impossible !

The talk was general, and Richard the chief speaker.

"We had rather a pleasant party at Templeton," he remarked, addressing Andrée ; "I wish you had come ; I assure you Lady Sarah was rather amazed by your refusal. Sergeant, the African explorer, was there, and Stapylton, the novelist, a most amusing fellow ; Mr. Vernon Lechmore, M. P. for Edensville, who is the land law reformer. We had a great discussion on the nationalization of land ; I have promised him to do another pamphlet, the last has gone very well, better than I expected. Then Lord Oldborough and his only daughter, who is supposed to be one of our richest heiresses. She is really not bad-looking,

l is exceedingly *chic*. She rides splendidly. I went ; with her almost every day."

"This must be one of the young ladies who have other advantages besides mere money," thought Andrée, but she did nothing.

"The shooting was no great things," continued Richard, in reply to some remark of his father's; "the birds are very shy; but there was some cub-hunting. Altogether we had a good time."

"Given her something to reflect upon," he added to himself. "I wonder what has happened to give her such look of animation; she has absolutely a little colour, and does not look so bad."

In truth Andrée hardly heard what her cousin said. She was eager to get away to her room and think. She was full of dawning hope that she had found the germ of congenial society. With Maud Anely, John Thurston, little daughter, and their friends, she might gather a ccle round her free from the dogmatic narrowness of the "Whichester Gardens" set, on the one side, and the fashionable finery of Lady Sarah's on the other.

To-morrow—yes, certainly to-morrow—she would write John Thurston, and ask permission to take Lilly out on idays. She would tell her dear old friend and benefactor all that had befallen her. How could she repay him he had done for her father and herself! But no; there could be no question of repayment. Perhaps she might be of use to little Lilly—real, substantial use; she must reflect upon this and take advice. But whose? Not Mr. Landon's. Then it flashed upon her that she must, even of age, have another legal adviser. Perhaps John Thurston would counsel her in this matter if he came home—and he would come home. How could he stay away from that sweet child?

Meanwhile Charlie Landon accompanied his brother to the door.

"You seem on very happy terms with our cousin," observed the elder. "Do you intend to go in for her money?"

"No; I like her too much and too little to try my game."

"That is as well. She is too big a fish for the young son."

"And scarcely big enough for the elder—eh, Richard? It would take a heap of money to start *you* as you would like in holy matrimony."

"Well, that is no affair of yours! Where is Emily?"

"Oh, she has gone somewhere with Mrs. Kellett."

"I think I'll just look in and see old K. Are Emily and Mrs. K. as thick as ever?"

"Rather thicker, only Emily has a rival in Miss Kent. Mrs. Kellett is cap in hand to our French cousin."

"I wonder why?" said Richard.

Charlie shrugged his shoulders.

"Half-past nine," said Richard, looking at his watch. "It is rather late. I dare say the women will be in by this time." He nodded to his brother and walked towards the door.

The weeks which succeeded were very happy ones for Andréa. She was constant in her visits to Alton Hall and indulged in the joy of giving her little friend numerous presents. She would have gladly invited her cousin Maud to pass some time with her, but felt that she must not impose too much on Mrs. Landon's complaisance, she hardly liked to ask Maud by herself, as the child came to her so fondly.

Andréa even began to build castles in the air. Christmas was close upon them, and then she could count

months of her minority on less than the fingers of two hands. Then, when she was free, she would set up house by herself, and perhaps have Maud Anally and little Lilly to live with her, if the latter's father continued to wander about.

She must accustom Mrs. Landon to the idea of her (Andrée) setting up independently. She would be sorry to hurt or offend that gentle, much-suppressed woman. Charlie would be sure to understand her. As to the rest, they did not count.

It was within a day or two of Christmas, the weather dark and dull; and Andrée, having a slight cold, stayed at home, giving her carriage to Mrs. Landon and Emily, who were full of business.

Andrée was writing in her own room, preparing a Christmas letter for her aunt, Madame Carrichon, when her maid entered and presented her with a card, on which was written "John Thurston."

"The gentleman is in the drawing-room, 'm."

"I am coming," returned Andrée, starting up, her heart beating fast. She had had no reply to the letter in which she had poured out so much of her heart, even Lilly had been looking for one in vain; and Andrée was growing very anxious, for there was a great deal of fever among the troops in Egypt.

She ran hastily downstairs, and there, standing under the big central gaselier, she saw a tall, gaunt-looking man, whom at the first sight she hardly recognized.

"What, Andrée!" he exclaimed, in a deep and rather harsh voice; "I hardly expected to find you so completely grown up." He took both her hands and stood gazing at her, while she could see, in spite of his thick red-grey moustache, that his mouth quivered. He had a strong and somewhat rugged face, with deep lines about the



eyes, which were steely grey, with an impatient expression, surmounted by bushy eyebrows, and a quantity of wavy hair, now changing from red to grey. He was a large-boned, broad-shouldered man, but his clothes hung on rather than fitted him. Andrée's heart was too full to speak; the tears slowly gathered in her eyes as the old hard days came back to her, and seemed to pass before them.

"I should have known you anywhere though," he resumed; "you have the same honest, steadfast eyes. You were always a little brick! But I don't suppose you would have known me—eh, Andrée?"

"Yes, I should; not at the first glance, but certainly at the second; only you look—older!"

"Yes, Andrée," letting her hands go. "I am a hundred years older than I was when I bid you good-bye!—older in spirit as well as in frame! Now you are no doubt thinking me a brute for never answering that letter of yours—it came to me like a voice out of the past! I have read it over a dozen times; but even then the fever had laid hold of me. I had a bad bout of it. As soon as I could be moved they hurried me aboard ship, and here I am, a ghastly object I dare say. But I shall pick up. I *must* live and work for my precious girlie!"

He paused, and they sat down. "You have been very good and kind in going to see her."

"Good and kind to myself," said Andrée in a low tone.

"And you—you see the likeness?" continued Thurston with a slight tremor in his voice.

"Yes, it is most striking. It gives the dear child half her charm."

Thurston raised his hand and then let it drop—a despairing gesture which conveyed an idea of the deepest sorrow.

"My poor little motherless girl!" he said, as if to himself—"motherless since she was a year old! But I am not strong enough to speak of these things to-day. We both of us have had hard times. To me fortune has been kinder of late—in some ways too late—though I have always the child to think of! You, too, I am glad to find, have done with poverty and difficulty."

"But to me also fortune has come too late. You know what it would have been to me had my father lived to share my prosperity. Ah! his death was cruel! He seemed to foresee all kinds of sorrow, of privation, for me. The thought of this made me very morbid at first; but I am better, and in a healthier frame of mind."

"That is what I dread more than anything else—what makes a coward of me—the prospect of leaving my child unprovided for. I have put away something for her, though not half enough. But tell me about yourself. I did not hear of your father's death till a considerable time after it had occurred. We had a desperate struggle at first, and I never wrote to anyone. Then my darling's health began to fail, and I was left alone; only the child to link me with life. So it came about that I lost sight of you, Andrée. Tell me how you came into this property." And Andrée told him.

"Hum!" said Thurston, looking round the room when she had finished. "These seem very nice quarters. Are you comfortable with these Landons?"

"Comfortable?—yes, in a material sense—but very lonely. I like Mrs. Landon, though she is rather depressing, and I also like the younger son. Still, I never feel really at home; as soon as I am free I shall have a house of my own."

"You are too young to live alone, Andrée."

"I do not think so; I feel quite old."

"Ay, but you are not. However, I hope that question will settle itself in the happiest and most natural manner. You don't seem very fond of your uncle?"

"No. He is a cold, honest man. There is an antagonism of nature between us, and when I am of age I do not think I shall have him for my legal adviser. I suppose I must have one."

"We shall discuss that matter. Now I must leave you. I——"

"Oh, not just yet, John. Think of how long it has been since I have seen the face of a true friend, and no friend was ever so good to us as you were."

"My poor child!" said Thurston kindly.

"And I shall never forget it," continued Andrée with a slight sob. "Let me repay something of your kindness to dear Lilly; I will always take care of her when you are obliged to be away."

"You have a true heart, Andrée, but you must not commit yourself to what you may not be able to carry out. You cannot tell what a year may bring forth. Meantime I am only too thankful to accept all ordinary friendship from you for my little daughter. The child talked of you by the yard to-day. I have been with her all the morning. Poor little soul, she was a little shy of me at first; but I must be away from her for some time yet. Now I have done about as much as I can manage, so I must go to my lodgings and rest."

"Yes; you look dreadfully tired. I must not keep you."

"Look here, Andrée, I am going to fetch Lilly to-morrow to stay with the Damers in Gloucester Terrace. *He* is my solicitor, and his wife looks after the child for me. I wish you could come and dine there. Mrs. Damer will call upon you and go through the usual formalities. *You will not stand on too much ceremony?*"

"Me! certainly not. If your friend is kind enough to invite me I shall certainly go."

"Thank you; you were always a reasonable little woman. Well, you will probably have cards and an invite. Now I really must go."

"Let me send for a cab; it is quite unfit for you to go out." She rang, and ordered one to be called.

"Ah, you are still the same careful nurse I remember creeping so softly round your father's bed or sofa. It would be a luxury to be nursed by you."

"I have got out of all those useful ways, I fear," she returned, shaking her head.

"They would soon come back, Andrée, for they are ingrained."

Here the cab was announced, and Thurston, after a long, close hand pressure, left her, scarce knowing whether to weep over the memories, the sorrows, his presence evoked from the shadowy past, or to rejoice over the great gain of his restoration, with all the old frank kindness undiminished and unchilled.

Mr. Landon was much disturbed when Andrée announced at dinner that Mr. Thurston had called upon her.

"Oh, indeed! I suppose the independence of modern young ladies extends to the receiving *tête-à-tête* visits from gentlemen," he observed testily.

"Certainly—from old and tried friends," said Andrée.

"Thurston?" repeated Mrs. Kellett, who with her husband was dining *sans cérémonie* at their neighbour's. "Is that the war correspondent of the 'Morning News'?"

"Yes, I believe so," said Andrée.

"He is a great friend of the Damers. I have heard them speak of him. He has done some wonderful feats in

Egypt. He is rather a wild character, with a desperate temper."

"Not a very desirable acquaintance," said Mr. Landon icily.

"A very desirable friend to me," returned Andrée with quiet decision.

## CHAPTER X.

JOHN THURSTON.

ANDRÉE NUGENT had been so stay-at-home, so little inclined to independent acquaintances, that the Landon family (with the exception of Charlie) felt it was rather presumptuous on the part of Mrs. Damer to call on their own particular heiress, especially as she came in no smart private carriage nor respectable hired brougham—not even in a hansom—but confessed, or rather avowed, that she had walked all the way from the wilds adjoining Maida Vale. Andrée thought she looked the better for the exercise. She was a ladylike woman, attractive, though scarcely pretty, of average height, and inclined to plumpness. Emily was in the drawing-room when she was announced, and immediately took up a piece of work as if to show her intention of remaining to witness the interview. Mrs. Damer was, however, exceedingly self-possessed, though gracious and natural in manner, and talked easily with Andrée, occasionally addressing Emily.

After a preliminary conversational canter, she asked Andrée to dinner on the following Saturday. “You must forgive the short notice, Miss Nugent,” she said. “It is not a dinner-party, but what a Scotch friend of mine used to call ‘a bit dinner.’ Mr. Thurston and his little girl would, I am sure, be greatly disappointed not to meet you; we heard so much of your kindness to Lilly.”

“I shall be very happy to dine with you, Mrs. Damer,

and to see my old friend again. I was grieved to find him so changed !”

“The change is a good deal due to illness, and when he has quite regained his health he will look more like his old self. He has always been a great chum of my husband’s. When his wife died I don’t think he would have long survived her if he had not had her baby to live for ; but he had recovered very much of his former self before he went to Egypt. He has been very ill indeed.”

“He must have been,” returned Andrée. “Does he think of returning ?”

“I rather think not. His great desire is to make a home for Lilly when she leaves school ; and he hardly thinks it right towards her to risk his life, as war correspondents often do. They are wonderful people,” she added, addressing Emily Landon, “and *the* new feature in modern warfare.”

“Yes ; I wonder any men are found who will go.”

“I must say, that were I a young active man, I should think it a tempting career. The excitement and adventure is so attractive,” said Mrs. Damer, with a smile ; and, taking up the last novel then being “talked about” from the table, she started a discussion with Andrée on books and their writers, to which Emily listened with surprise and disapprobation.

“I have far outstayed the limitation of an ordinary visit,” said Mrs. Damer. “But you have yourself to blame, Miss Nugent. I hope you will come early on Saturday—unceremoniously—that Lilly may have the pleasure of seeing you for some little time before she goes to bed.”

Andrée promised she would, and accompanied her visitor to the door.

"Mrs. Damer is very agreeable," she remarked, on re-joining Emily.

"She says some strange things, Andrée, and seems to like odd sort of books—books I am sure my mother would not let me read."

"I do not think she could prevent you, Emily, if you chose to read them," said Andrée, laughing.

"Why do you say that?" began Emily, when Mrs. Landon came in from a distant shopping expedition. She complained of cold and asked for tea; so the subject dropped.

Richard Landon had come less frequently to his father's house since the family returned from Wales; and when he did come no one could be more friendly and less loverlike than he was in his demeanour towards his cousin. Her former appreciation of his merits as a good talker and a sympathetic listener returned in an increasing measure. Indeed, a strong preference for Richard Landon might have developed itself but for her conviction of his worldliness. Sometimes it even occurred to her that he really liked her personally, but she always dismissed the idea; and Charlie Landon—light-hearted, frank, obliging—continued her chief favourite, though not altogether a congenial companion.

Richard's pamphlets had been very much noticed and commented on; and he already dreamed of a parliamentary career in the dim future, if he only had a financial basis to build upon. At present, however, he had none; and he feared that when his father's comfortable capital was divided among his children, his (Richard's) share would be but a moderate competence. Could he command even that competence now, what might he not do with it! But Mr. Landon, though proud of his eldest son, grumbled at the amount he cost. He wished Rich-



ard had started in some line that would have sooner brought him a tangible turn, than adopted the genteel beggary of the Bar. Nevertheless Mr. Landon had a high, almost a deferential, opinion of his eldest son, who had but one fault in his eyes—a tendency to the ornamental rather than the accumulative.

On this especial day Mr. Landon brought Richard back to dinner with him; the family meal was consequently more social and animated, and when it was nearly over Richard said to his cousin:

“Lady Sarah Temple is in town; I saw her this morning. She commissioned me to bring you to dinner on Saturday, and said she hoped you would forgive an informal invitation.”

“I am very sorry, Richard, but I have already promised to dine with Mrs. Damer; otherwise, I should have been very pleased to go to Lady Sarah.”

“Damer!” repeated Richard, “I have met people of that name at the Kelletts. Can’t you put her off? I really think you have snubbed Lady Sarah enough. I do not know when she took a fancy to any girl before.”

“She is very good, and I am much obliged to her, but I cannot break my engagement to Mrs. Damer. Besides, I want to go; I am to meet some very old friends, and will you explain this to Lady Sarah, Richard?”

“You had better explain it yourself,” he returned, abruptly. “How many of Lady Sarah’s invitations have you refused?”

“I do not know!—and, after all, Lady Sarah is no royal person, whose invitation is a command. I should like to dine with her, I assure you—but I cannot on this occasion; I shall write and explain it to Lady Sarah.”

There was rather an awkward silence, which *Andrée* broke by addressing Mrs. Landon. “If it is not incon-

venient to you I should be very glad to invite Miss Analy here next week ; it is a long time since she has had a real holiday."

"I shall be very pleased to see her, Andrée," returned Mrs. Landon.

"I think you have been neglecting your friend of late, Andrée," said Charlie. "Why, how many months is it since she was here?"

"A good many; but it was not easy for her to get away. Then she had a very bad cold at the beginning of the Christmas holidays, so there is only a week left, and if you would let me ask her to stay here for the greater part of it, I should be very glad," concluded Andrée, speaking to Mrs. Landon, who replied :

"Certainly," with a glance at her husband.

"Thank you," said Andrée, her colour deepening a little.

When the ladies left the room Richard, who had looked after them with a frown, drew his chair nearer his father's.

"I don't know how it is," he said, "that we never seem really to get hold of Andrée Nugent. She comes to us out of the slums of Paris—without a friend in the world except a poor beggar of a governess—to a house such as she never saw in her life before, and is plunged among people of position such as she could never have dreamed of associating with, and nothing seems to make the smallest impression on her; I should have thought my mother might have moulded her into any shape."

"Your mother is not likely to mould anyone," said Mrs. Landon.

"I am not so sure of that!" cried Charlie. "As it is, she only one of us who could influence Andrée in the least as my mother. The fact is, she is a deuced deal cleverer

than any of us—except Richard, perhaps—and has a very clear idea of what she wants; you may make up your mind, sir, once she is of age, she won't stay an hour under your roof."

"Then she will be rather ungrateful, for she has received every consideration at our hands," said Mr. Landon, filling himself a glass of claret.

"That may be," remarked Richard; "it is not unnatural that she should wish for a home of her own. Let us hope she will not pick up some *mauvais sujet* to share it with her; for in the matter of men the wisest women are blind, or rather cannot focus them properly."

"And *vice versa*," said Charlie. "However, I don't wonder that Richard would like to keep Andrée and her money in the family—if he can!"

"And if I cannot find a better investment," added Richard, carelessly.

"By the way, Richard, how did that venture of yours in Argentine Mines succeed?" asked his father.

"Fairly well! of course I did not stay in now they are going down, I sold in time; now I am holding on a bit in Egyptians—watching 'the turn in the tide.'"

"Don't gamble too wildly," said Mr. Landon, in a warning tone.

"You may trust *me*, sir."

As the conversation seemed to have settled on the money market, Charlie went to the drawing-room and asked for some music, which meant that Andrée was to play the accompaniments of some of his songs.

"And so you are going to let us have a peep at your handsome friend again—when?"

"Your mother suggests that she should come next Wednesday and stay till Sunday evening."

"That is rather a nuisance! I have agreed with Fred

Lorrimer to run down to Brighton from Saturday till Monday."

"Well, Charlie, it will be better for you than staying here."

"What do you mean?"

"That the sea air will refresh and brace you."

"Not on this occasion I think; I would rather look into your friend's blue eyes, than at the blue sea."

"Don't talk such nonsense, Charlie, I will not allow any bad jokes about Maud."

"Bad jokes, eh! well, they are bad style."

"Yes, very; let me hear no more!" and Andrée was silent for a few minutes, then she broke out abruptly, but in a low tone:

"I wish I had a house of my own."

"Why?"

"That I might be mistress and ask who I liked."

"Can't you do what you like here?"

"Yes, quite as much as one can expect to do in another person's house, for your mother is very kind and considerate; but I cannot feel quite free."

"No, I suppose not. Well, you have not very long to wait."

"Quite long enough, I think!"

"Will you invite me to dinner sometimes?"

"Yes, certainly. Come, sing that Norwegian song, Charlie, we must leave the future to take care of itself."

Richard and his father sat long together in the dining-room, and when they joined the ladies the former spoke awhile to Andrée in an amiable tone, then rather suddenly asked her if she intended writing to Lady Sarah.

"Yes, of course I shall, and explain things, then I shall call."

"Pray do; now, good-night. I have to look in on

Mrs. Berkley at a gathering she has of the conversational order. By the way, I heard some fellows at the club talking of your ally, Thurston. It seems he has distinguished himself a good deal, and if he would or could go out, might be a very considerable lion."

"I don't think he is the stuff that lions are really made of."

"Well, we shall see; good-night!" and he was gone.

It was, indeed, something for Andrée to look forward to, this dinner at Mrs. Damer's, to meet John Thurston, and hear his well-known voice, which was almost the only bit of his personality untouched by change. She smiled to herself, a somewhat sad smile, as she drove towards Maida Vale in the smart little *coupé* which was hers for the time, and compared the present with the past, when the "course" of one franc fifty in a *fiacre* was a burst of wild extravagance rarely to be thought of, and the recurrence of rent day a terror not to be lightly affronted. It was not to be wondered at that his little daughter's future was a source of so much anxiety to Thurston, for poverty was a terrible evil; while, on the other hand, mere money could give little real enjoyment. While she pondered on Lilly and her father the germ of an idea on which she afterwards acted, began to develop itself in Andrée's mind, and so occupied her that the long distance between Bayswater and the neighborhood of Kilburn seemed rapidly accomplished.

Andrée found the Damer's house a comfortable, unassuming, but pretty abode. As she came early only Mrs. Damer and Lilly were ready to receive her. She felt indeed rewarded for any care and attention bestowed upon Lilly when she saw the joy that illumined the child's face when she came into the room. The fire and a picturesque lamp were the only lights, so Andrée sat down

on a low sofa, Lilly nestling beside her, for a quiet talk with her hostess, who was, she felt, a congenial companion.

Mr. Thurston had not been very well, Mrs. Damer said. He feared an attack of rheumatism, and seemed to suffer from the damp of an English winter. "He was to consult Dr. Brandling, the great authority on rheumatic affections, either yesterday or to-day. It is touching to see how anxious he is to preserve his health and life for the child's sake. Thank God he has recovered his mental tone, for I shall never forget his depression when I first met him, soon after the death of his wife. My husband, whom he had not met for some years, was, I am glad to say, a great help to him, and drew him into a little society. Lilly! run away, and ask Emma to change your frock and brush your hair, to look smart for dear father."

When the little one had left them, Mrs. Damer asked :

"Don't you think she looks very pale and thin? I am afraid Clapham is too cold and damp for her. I do not like to trouble Mr. Thurston about it now—he cannot bear much—but will you consult with that nice Miss Analy who is so good to Lilly? It has been such a comfort to me that she is so careful of the child, and writes to me, for I have not much time to visit her, and the distance is great."

They discussed the question of Lilly's health with much earnestness until interrupted by the arrival of Mr. Damer, who brought Thurston with him. They were soon joined by another gentleman, who was introduced to Andrée as Mr. North, and seemed to be quite at home with the rest of the party. Thurston looked ill; his eyes were hollow and his face thinner than before; moreover, there was an expression of pain in his countenance. But he was more like his old self in manner, and the emotion

he had shown on his first meeting with Andrée had disappeared. Lilly, in her best frock, was established on Andrée's knee; she did not run to meet her father, though she seemed shyly pleased to see him.

"I am still a stranger to her," he said, when he had shaken hands with Andrée, as he lifted her up and kissed her fondly. "My Lilly forgets poor father when he is so far away! I think I shall stay at home in future with my little daughter, and cultivate her acquaintance."

The child gazed at him while he spoke, then, putting her arms gently round his neck, pressed her small mouth against his sunburnt face. Thurston's eyes softened and brightened as she did so.

"She will love you well when she is accustomed to you," said Andrée.

"May you be a true prophet," returned Thurston, drawing a chair beside her, and setting down Lilly, who returned to Andrée's lap, and sat watching her father.

"How is the young lady who has been so good to my little girl?" continued Thurston. "I have not seen her, but Mrs. Damer has told me about her."

"Miss Analy? Quite well. She is coming to stay with me on Wednesday—at least, Mrs. Landon allows me to ask her. Yes, she is very fond of Lilly."

"Then you are—" Thurston was beginning when dinner was announced, and the host, a keen-eyed, dark, dapper man, rather below middle height, slight and active-looking, came across the room to give his arm to Andrée, and Lilly was dismissed with many kisses to bed.

Not since the old scrambling days, when Major Nugent's somewhat doubtful friends and associates used to frequent his lofty lodgings and hold high converse on

olitics and war, art and journalism, had Andrée enjoyed herself as at that dinner.

Everything was pretty, cosy, and simple, while the alk seemed to her delightful; alive with interest, ready owing, and flashing frequent gleams of light, possibly f the "will-o'-the-wisp" kind, but none the less brilliant, on future eventualities. It seemed to her that the en present had somehow got nearer to the core of things an anyone she had met since the clouds and thick darkness which succeeded her father's death had closed round er.

North was a critic, engaged on a high-class periodical, and Mr. Damer himself had dabbled in literature in his arlier struggling days. The difference between the views, ne anticipations, the principles of these men and those of er usual associates almost made Andrée smile. It also laddened her to see that John Thurston entered nto the various discussions with eagerness and energy. life was again putting forth young leaves for him, however tender his memory of the past.

As Andrée listened in silence, drinking in all that as said, Thurston turned suddenly to her, and exclaimed :

"You are just the same quiet mouse you always were, andrée! but I fancy very little escapes you. If there was nce a darkness which might be felt, so there is a silence, he sympathy of which may be felt. But you must talk, y dear girl, or the common herd will write you down ull."

"Is it much matter if dullards do so? It is such pleasure to listen—at least to talk like this."

"I suppose talk and everything else is orthodox to the ast extremity at your uncle's house."

"My uncle's? oh! Mr. Landon's; yes. It seems as



if no idea less than fifty years old ever occurred to them."

"And you think we must occupy Egypt for a considerable time to come?" said North, addressing Thurston.

"It seems to me inevitable," he returned; and the stream of talk flowed away from Andrée.

When they reassembled in the drawing-room Thurston sat down beside her and began a semi-confidential conversation.

"And are you tolerably happy, my dear little friend, with these starched relations of yours?" he asked, looking at her with kindly interest.

"Much happier than I thought I should be at first. I was wretched then; the loneliness, the strangeness, were terrible. After Maud Analy came within touch I felt much less desolate. Then, I was bitter—unreasonably bitter, perhaps—against Mr. Landon and his family; now I like some of them. But, Mr. Thurston, I long to be free, to have a house of my own."

"First, I will not have you call me Mr. Thurston; it puts miles between us. I shall never call you anything but Andrée, it is such a quaint name; and I must be John to you, as of old."

"Very well," ejaculated Andrée.

"And who are you going to set up housekeeping with?"

"I don't think I should like an elderly chaperon, with all the qualifications; it would destroy the idea of home. What I *do* think of (and I have thought a great deal of the future), is to take Maud Analy to live with me."

"How old is the lady?"

"Oh! nearly a year younger than myself."

"What would orthodoxy say to such a *ménage*?"

"How could it object? I am older than my years in

every sense, especially in looks; and there is no emancipation so complete as the possession of independent means."

"That is true; still this matter of setting up house is a serious one. Promise me to do nothing rash; promise you will hear me on the subject. I am sufficiently orthodox, yet dashed with Bohemianism. Just the counsellor or a daring spirit like yours."

"If you will take the trouble of counselling me, I shall be but too happy to be counselled," returned Andrée, her tears starting to her dark eyes. "You were always a true friend."

"And will be," added Thurston in a low voice. There was a pause, and he resumed: "I should like to see this Miss Analy—and soon—for I am going to Italy next week. My doctor says it is absolutely necessary I should get away before the east winds of February set in; and, as I know it is absolutely necessary I should get well and strong, so I am going."

"I am very sorry you are obliged to go," said Andrée, looking at him with moist eyes. "It seemed to me that I caught an echo of my past life when I heard your voice again. When do you think of returning?"

"As soon as summer has really set in. And, Andrée, remember, I am always ready to be of use to you if I can. When shall you be of age?"

"Early in November. Yet it seems a long way off; I have so many projects."

"We must discuss them all when I come back, or by letter. If you would write to me about yourself, about my little Lilly, and—oh, anything! it would be a great kindness. I don't like troubling Mrs. Damer more than I can help, for she has a busy life; and I am always hungry for news of my small treasure."

"It will be delightful to write and get letters," cried Andrée, brightening up at such a prospect. "If you wish to see Miss Analy, perhaps you would call on her at Chichester Gardens one day while she is with us, or I will drive you down to Alton House."

"What! have you a carriage, Andrée?" said Thurston, smiling.

"Yes, really; that is, they hire one for my use. Does it not sound like an Aladdin and the wonderful lamp kind of story?"

"It does, indeed. You are a wonderful little woman to keep your head so steady in such a transformation scene."

"That is the accident of my temperament, John. I was more startled than exhilarated; but I am growing rapidly accustomed to the comforts and conveniences that money can buy. It is amazing how one's wants increase with the means of gratifying them. All I hope and pray is that I may not grow selfish and unmindful of others."

"That, indeed, would be an extraordinary change for you, Andrée, when I remember what a willing little slave you were."

"A slave! Ah, no, never. Whatever I did, was a free-will offering, like your help."

It was ultimately decided that Andrée should bring her friend Maud to call on Mrs. Damer the following Thursday, and John should meet them there.

It was past eleven when Andrée found herself driving towards Chichester Gardens, after a delightful evening, and with a sense of hopefulness such as she had never experienced since fortune bestowed its favour on her. She had found friends and companionship, and both were due to the man who had been the mainstay of her troubled *childhood*—whose generous help had often kept her heed-

less father's head above water: and now she had found and, she believed, welded together the long-severed links that had once held them so closely, she would cling closely to them. John seemed equally pleased at their reunion. How good it was of him to propose the correspondence to which she looked forward with such keen pleasure. To her he seemed an intellectual giant condescending to a lowly student. He did not so impress her in the old days; she only remembered his cheerfulness, his helpfulness, the wonderful loving-kindness which seemed to enwrap them all during the courtship between him and his lost love. Now he appeared sterner and graver, curiously decided in all he said, and not without a certain rugged dignity; but the old tenderness spoke in voice and eyes when he addressed his child. Indeed, the whole evening was charming, and Andrée mentally entered Mr. and Mrs. Damer's names on the roll of her future friends. Thurston and Maud, the Damers, Charlie Landon, and Richard, also, *if* he were not too artificial to blend with so pleasantly Bohemian a group,—here was the beginning of a social circle after her own heart.

When she reached Chichester Gardens everyone had gone to bed except her own maid. This would have startled her a short time back, but to-night it signified nothing; she felt that she was a free woman, and resolved to enjoy her freedom.

Andrée, nevertheless, was in good time for breakfast. She was met with some remarks on her dissipation of the night before.

"Did you turn the dinner into a dance?" asked Emily. "We expected you at ten, for it was barely six when you went away."

"Oh, no! we did nothing but sit and talk."

"Great powers!" cried Charlie, "what an exhaust-

ive outpouring you must have had! I wonder you survived."

"I was only sorry to come away. You see, the people I met had something to talk about."

"Just so; they were not Chichester Garden muffs."

"Charlie! You know I never meant anything of the kind."

## CHAPTER XI.

### PLANS.

As Maud had shopping to do, both for herself and the misses Jansen, she came into town early, and Andrée met her at Victoria. They proceeded at once about their business, and it was near dinner-time when they reached Hichester Gardens.

Maud was less joyous than usual, for her spirits generally rose high when she had a holiday, and the company of her friend. Still, she was sufficiently herself to greet Mrs. Landon and Emily effusively and Charlie gaily, for that young man had managed to leave the office at an early hour, and was in the drawing-room when Andrée and her *protégée* arrived.

"I thought you had forsworn London and all its works," he said, as he shook hands with Maud. "Why, must be six months since you bestowed the light of your countenance upon us."

"Ah, you see I felt the school could not get on without me, Mr. Landon, and I was too conscientious to desert my post."

"Now you are here we ought to celebrate the event by doing something desperate. Let us go to the pantomime."

Maud clapped her hands. "It would be quite too lovely," she said.

"Yes," added Andrée; "let us go. I have never seen a pantomime; but pray secure places to-morrow,

Charlie, for Miss Analy has only three available evenings, and it may not be easy to get four places just now—for you will come with us, will you not?" turning to Emily.

"No, thanks; I do not care for pantomimes, and I am engaged for every night this week."

"If you do not care for it, why you are better engaged."

"It is really always vulgar," returned Emily.

"Still, I should like to see one for once. Come, Maud, we have scarcely time to dress."

"That's a nice pleasant boy," said Maud, thoughtfully, when they had reached her room.

"Who, Charlie?" asked Andrée, lighting the candles on her dressing-table. "Why, he must be five or six years older than either of us!"

"No matter; he hasn't had our experience: he has only walked in pleasant places. He has never known what it was to wonder where he could find next week's food and shelter, as I have done in Paris—and I would have starved before I would have written home. Everything has been made smooth for him, and, I should say, deadly dull. Oh, I wish I were a man! I should have always floated *then*. I should have done everything and seen everything. I wish it ever so much more than usual to-day, because I begin to feel very uncertain how long I may be let to stay at Alton House."

"How so, Maud?"

"Miss Jansen asked me to have tea with her yesterday, and we had a long palaver. She told me that she was very pleased with me, and spoke kindly enough, *but*—there is always a *but*, you know—they had a niece whom they wished to help; she is at school in Germany, but will come back at Easter, and, if they find her fit for the complicated duties of under governess, they will put her in *my place*. I should not mind so much, though I am

rather happy with Miss Jansen, only," her lip quivered, "I hate the thought of leaving Lilly."

"This is most unexpected!" cried Andrée; "I must not stay to discuss the matter now, but don't let yourself be miserable about it, Maud. I have a plan; I'll tell you all about it to-night."

"You are an angel—a real trump!" cried Maud, as Andrée disappeared.

The dinner was a less formal function than usual, as Mr. and Mrs. Kellett, Richard, and their neighbour, young Mr. Lorrimer, had been invited, and conversation, or rather talk, flowed freely. Mrs. Kellett had been a good deal shut up in consequence of the illness of her boy, who had had a severe cold, ending in bronchitis, and was harmed to be out and about once more after such an interval of seclusion and dulness. She was looking pale, yet stout, having missed her usual exercise, and appeared to be much exercised in her mind respecting Maud Analy, whom she examined critically.

"Who is she, my dear Miss Nugent?" she whispered to Andrée. "I never saw her here before."

"She is a friend of mine," returned Andrée; "we were at the same pension in Paris."

"Oh, indeed!" taking for granted that it was some expensive establishment; "and is she staying in town?"

"She is staying at Clapham. Don't you remember your kindly assisting me to place a young lady at Alton House?"

"Of course I do; and is that the lady? Well, I must say she is—rather—rather striking looking for a governess."

"Yes, she is very handsome."

"But a little peculiar, don't you think?"

"Rather uncommon."



Here dinner was announced. Mr. Landon took in Mrs. Kellett, and Richard was given Andrée, while Charlie fell to Maud's share, the two laughing and chattering gaily all through dinner, attracting frequent glances from Mrs. Kellett, though her most earnest attention was fixed on Richard and his companion. They were as usual rather interested in each other's conversation, and Andrée confided to him that she had received a kind little note from Lady Sarah, asking her to tea on the following Sunday.

"Which you have refused, I presume?" he remarked.

"Oh no, Richard! It would have been too uncivil," said Andrée; "and though I am most reluctant to leave Miss Analy, I have written to accept."

"That is a great concession."

When all were re-assembled in the drawing-room, Mrs. Kellett, gathering her dress closer, made a slight gesture of invitation to Richard, who sat down by her on the sofa, where they conversed for some time in low tones, while Andrée and the younger members of the party gathered round the piano.

"Do you know it is more than three weeks since I have seen you, Dick?" said Mrs. Kellett.

"Of course I know; I did not like to intrude on you while your little boy was ill," he returned, in a soothing tone.

"You used not to fear intruding, Dick. I was awfully anxious about the poor little fellow."

"I have no doubt of it; your maternal feeling has always been beautiful and admirable."

"Do you know, I suspect you are an impostor."

"How, my dear friend?"

"You have always pretended," dropping her voice,

"that only a terrible necessity drives you to pay court to the heiress, because your poverty, not your will, consented. Now I have seen you together I cannot help thinking it is more than your poverty consents. It strikes me that you quite understand each other."

"Then you credit me with a very high degree of intelligence, for Miss Nugent is by no means easily understood."

"If I were Miss Nugent I should not have a showy girl like that young lady about with me. She has very bad manners, too. Doesn't she carry on with your brother?"

Richard glanced at the group disdainfully. "She has a good deal of animation," he said, slowly, "but she is neither loud nor unladylike."

"What were you and Miss Nugent saying about Lady Sarah Temple, at dinner?"

"That Miss Nugent is going to a *tête-à-tête* tea with her on Sunday next."

"You don't mean it!"

"I do, indeed. Miss Nugent has already refused several invitations from Lady Sarah."

"It is the last thing I should have expected!" exclaimed Mrs. Kellett. "She is neither pretty nor lively nor fashionable; she dresses like a regular dowdy, and yet that old woman, who just lives for the world and her own pleasure, takes her up. Well, I wish her joy of such an ill-natured, scornful old creature. Really, Dick, she looks a perfect Jezebel."

"This is treason! my dear Mrs. Kellett, I—"

"Mrs. Kellett!" repeated the lady, interrupting him, "that is enough; that shows me how much truth and loyalty your Lady Sarahs have left in you!" She rose quickly and joined the group round the piano, talking

good deal and laughing shrilly except when compelled to keep silence during a song.

The guests did not stay late, and Maud paused at Andrée's door when they retired.

"I will come on to your room," said Andrée. "I have a good deal to say, and it will be better for me to be wandering about when the lights are out, than for you."

"That's a dear!" cried Maud. "We seldom have the chance of a chat." As soon as the door was safely shut, she exclaimed, "Who is that Mrs. Kellett?" Andrée explained. "I don't like her," continued Maud. "She despises me, and she doesn't like you."

"Oh, nonsense!" said Andrée. "She has been rather nice to me—as nice as she could be."

"Well, there is something repulsive to me about her," persisted Maud.

"Now," said Andrée, "take off your dress and brush your hair while I talk."

"Certainly, dear."

"I want to tell you about my plans," resumed Andrée, sitting down in a low basket-work chair and clasping her hands round her knees. "I only hope I may be able to carry them out. You know I will not live here after I am of age. I think they know that very well. I do want a home of my own, where I can ask my own friends and be mistress, and I do not feel inclined to wait till September for emancipation. I intend to want very much to go to the seaside in June."

"Then Mrs. Landon will offer to go with you," said Maud.

"I should not mind that. I like her, and it would do her good to be away from her own people for awhile. What I specially wish is to take that dear little Lilly early *to the sea*; I do not think she is as well as she ought to

be at Clapham. Her father will probably go away to Egypt or some remote place, and she would be so happy with us."

"‘Us!’ Who are ‘us!’"

"You and me, Maud. I shall take you, too, to teach Lilly and look after her. It will be quite too delightful."

"Delightful is not the word: it will be heavenly!" cried Maud, ceasing to unfasten her dress, and clasping her hands. "It is just like a dream, too good to be true."

"I do not see why it should not become the sober certainty of waking bliss, Maud. I know the Landons will object. They will say we are too young to set up house together; and if I were inclined to fill my house with gay company and give entertainments, we might be—but you and I have had enough of discomfort to be content with quiet happiness. I have the consciousness of being a plain woman to steady me; no visions of admiring crowds can upset *my* balance. It must be very delightful to know that people love to look upon you—but of course it is a joy that can never be mine."

"But are you plain!" exclaimed Maud, looking keenly at her. "No; certainly not, when you speak and smile, Andrée."

"Never mind, it is of no matter," said Andrée, laughing softly. "I never think about it now. When first I went among the girls at Madame Carrichon's they used to talk so much about beauty that I used to look in the glass and be rather miserable at being ‘an ugly duckling,’ but I have quite forgotten those fancies; the people who love me will like my face. Only this consciousness will always make me suspicious of any man who makes love to me, as many would, no doubt, on account of my money."

"Why, Andrée, do you mean to say you will never

marry because you think you will only be sought for your money?"

"No, indeed! I shall never be so meanly suspicious, but I shall not believe all that is said to me. Besides, I should like to marry. I am very lonely, and the companionship of a sympathetic man friend would be charming. One need not be desperately in love to make marriage happy."

"Well, no! I daresay not," returned Maud, untying and shaking down her abundant glossy hair; "that is, I never intend to be desperately in love myself—but I shall insist on my *husband*, if I ever have one, being desperately in love. Just think of having a house of your own, Andrée! and servants; of giving the orders, and paying the bills yourself; and, more than all, having the money to do it with! of forbidding this, and commanding that; to me it would seem like a perpetual miracle."

"It is amazing how soon one gets accustomed to things," said Andrée, dreamily.

"How many servants would you keep?" continued Maud, before whose eyes danced dazzling pictures of joy and ease.

"That would depend on the size of the house," returned Andrée, soberly. "I like things to be nice and pretty and well-ordered. I have learned to want so many things since I lived with the Landons; but grandeur and finery give me no pleasure; a large establishment would oppress me. Moreover, my fortune (think of *my* fortune, Maud!) is by no means inexhaustible."

"A cook, a housemaid, a parlour-maid, and your own maid would do," said Maud, as if to herself. "You would not attempt a man-servant?"

"I should as soon admit a gorilla," said Andrée quietly.

"Yes, I should be frightened out of my wits at a solemn man out of livery; you don't know how the butler at the Deanery oppressed me." A pause ensued which Maud broke, asking, "When do you think of starting this delightful scheme, Andrée?"

"Not for three or four months. The nearer it is to my coming of age the less opposition I shall encounter. Then Mrs. Landon will have got over her winter dinner-parties; they give very few in the season. I should like her to have a nice rest. You know I must have a far larger allowance, that is what Mr. Landon will worry about. I shall give you a decent salary, Maud."

"I am sure you will, dear!"

"And then you must try and save money. Oh, Maud, there is nothing so appalling, so degrading, as being penniless. It is like being a stray dog; everyone drives it away, everyone resents its existence."

"That's true!" acquiesced Maud; but she evidently was not thinking of what she was saying, and after a moment's thought she broke out again with, "Do you know, Andrée, I think Mr. Landon—I mean the eldest—likes you very much."

"So do I," returned Andrée calmly; "of course, if I had entered this house as a pensioner or a dependent he would scarcely have seen or recognized me; but, as it is, it was worth his while to find out what I was made of, and the material suits his taste—his mental taste I mean."

"He is a poor-hearted, mercenary toad!" was Maud's summary. Andrée laughed.

"I have not made him out quite yet; but he interests me, and we are excellent friends."

"Yes, so it seems. I don't like him at all! I am afraid you will end by falling in love with him: then he

will get hold of all your money and grind you down with petty tyrannies."

"What a terrible prophecy!" cried Andrée. "Why, Maud, it is midnight; I must fly! I do hope I shall not disturb anyone. To-morrow we lunch at Mrs. Damer's, and Mr. Thurston will be there. He wants to thank you for your kind care of Lilly."

"Ah, that was for my own pleasure."

"We might start early and look at the French Gallery before we penetrate to Maida Vale."

"That will be charming; good night, you dear, kind, generous thing!"

Andrée had probably never been so happy as at this period of her life, though she scarcely knew it. She always looked back to the days spent with her father as her best; but the memory of all the unsatisfied needs, the demoralizing evasions of implacable creditors, the sordid details of a life such as theirs had faded, and the high lights, the occasional intervals of ease, when the Major could give a cup of coffee, or a little supper to some of his least objectionable comrades, or a day in the woods to his daughter, remained all the brighter for the dimness in which they were set. With the best and the worst of those days Thurston was closely associated. How often he had shared his slender stock of money with them; or brought what he said was his own dinner to eat beside their fire, which the Major always contrived to keep going, and so made a considerable addition to their meagre meal. These were obligations which could never be "paid off."

Maud was a little excited about her meeting with Mr. Thurston, and in the course of the morning asked Andrée more than once if her bonnet was right, and her hair *in order*. Maud was a coquette in a half-unconscious

way ; she always expected a certain amount of recognition from men, and though she did not take much trouble to ensure it, she had a knack of putting on, in an impromptu manner, something that suited her when the occasion came.

They found John Thurston already established in Mrs. Damer's drawing-room, with his little daughter on his knee, and hugging a doll nearly as large as herself, which her father had brought as a parting gift.

At sight of Maud she jumped down and ran eagerly to kiss her, even before she shook hands with Andrée, who noticed that when Thurston was presented to her a new expression of grave respectful pity came into her bright, laughing eyes.

Luncheon was soon announced, and throughout the repast Maud was more silent than usual, speaking only when she was spoken to.

Mrs. Damer's boys, who had been out when Andrée was last her guest, were of the party ; slim, eager lads of thirteen and fifteen, well-mannered, natural, and full of talk about their holiday fun, now nearly at an end. They were both much taken with Maud, and showed it by taking her to see some carpenter's work they had been doing in a room downstairs, which was abandoned to them and their untidiness.

After they had all returned to the drawing-room Thurston talked for awhile apart with Maud, who presently came quickly over to where Mrs. Damer and Andrée sat together, exclaiming, " Isn't this charming, Andrée ? " " this " was a morocco case containing a brooch, consisting of a small scarabæus set in gold, of a beautiful Egyptian design. " Mr. Thurston has given it to me as a New Year's gift. Is it not good of him ? It will be my crown jewel ! "



The scarabæus was cut in semi-transparent white stone, with glints of colour like moonstone, and formed a pretty ornament. It was duly admired, and then Thurston sat down beside Andrée, while Maud and Mrs. Damer went away to look through Lilly's clothes and make a list of what new things she required.

"I like that young friend of yours!" exclaimed Thurston, when they were alone. "She is a lady, and there is a frank, healthy tone about her, mentally and physically: she is a very handsome girl into the bargain; and, I confess, I like good-looking people. My small daughter is uncommonly lucky; first, in falling into Miss Analy's hands, and through her meeting you. But we should have drifted together somehow. I don't believe we were ever really severed. Though I seemed careless and forgetful it was only the force of anxiety and trouble that kept me silent. Then, when I heard of your father's death, I did write to your old address, but had no answer."

"I am glad you wrote," said Andrée; "but I never had your letter. It would have been a great comfort if I had received it."

"I must have seemed a brute!" exclaimed Thurston, and a pause ensued. Then he resumed, "I leave the day after to-morrow, and mean to be away about three months. My editor has commissioned me to write some Italian letters for him, or anything suitable I may pick up. I hope to come back quite invigorated, and ready for foreign service. Much as I long to stay in England, the superior pay tempts me abroad. I hope to have earned my rest by the time Lilly has done with school." And he looked with yearning eyes to the child who sat in the window, showing a picture book to her new doll.

"I am sure you will deserve it," murmured Andrée.

"She is a delicate little thing," resumed Thurston. "But I shall leave England this time with a far lighter heart than I did before. I left Lilly with a relation of mine, a good woman enough, but too delicate and lonely to make a cheerful home for the child. I don't know how I could have managed had I not renewed my acquaintance—I may say friendship—with Damer, before I went to Egypt. He introduced me to his wife, and we took to each other. When my cousin married, Mrs. Damer was wonderfully good, she gave my little girl shelter, and found the school at Clapham."

"Where I had the great pleasure of finding her," returned Andrée.

They continued to speak of the child's health, her education, and matters which generally concerned her.

"Tell me something more of yourself," said Thurston, at length; "I am growing selfish about that child. What are your plans, your ideas of the future?"

Andrée looked away towards the window with eyes that saw nothing near at hand. "Ideas come fast enough," she said; "plans are very formless. I have a great longing to enjoy life; it has slowly developed. At first I was too dazed, too full of regret, to be happy; now, at least, I wish for enjoyment, but I must enjoy in my own way."

"Of course. What is joy to one, is disgust to another; what is your way? Social success, a brilliant encouragement, a life of gaiety?"

"I scarcely know what I really want, yet," said Andrée; "but hitherto I have loved harmony and tranquillity more than brilliancy. A life of noisy gaiety seems more repellent than attractive. But as you wish me to write to you about Lilly, I suppose I may put in a little about myself? and you shall have my ideas respecting the future."

"I shall be greatly disappointed if you do not!" ejaculated Thurston warmly. "You were always a thoughtful, womanly little creature, Andrée, and you have developed just as I expected you would. I don't fancy you will care much for frivolities."

"I hope I am not priggish," said Andrée, with a smile, a very sweet, intelligent smile, Thurston thought, though her mouth was too large and too firm for beauty.

"I have not found it out yet," returned Thurston; "but I intend to find out all your failings when I come back."

"Very well! I like your friends Mr. and Mrs. Damer, John. They are the kind of people I should like to know."

"You are right; they are real—no shams about them. You will find Mrs. Damer is very ready to meet your advances."

The entrance of that lady with a slip of paper in her hands, followed by Maud Analy, interrupted the conversation, and soon after tea was brought. Then Miss Nugent's carriage was announced.

"Can I put you down anywhere?" Andrée asked him.

"Thank you, no. I am going to inflict myself on Mrs. Damer. Her husband is coming home early to have a talk, and settle divers matters, as I shall not see him again till I return after my hunt for health."

Farewells were spoken, and Andrée, with her friend, were soon rolling away south-west.

Maud Analy enjoyed her second visit to Chichester Gardens even more than her first. There was so much hope dawning on her for the future; while Charlie London's constant covert attention amused and delighted her. *She was enchanted with the pantomime, laughing with*

childlike glee at the clown's jokes, when they were not too political and *fin de siècle* for her comprehension.

"I have had such a happy time, dear," she said, as they drove towards South Audley Street, where Andrée was to be dropped, while the carriage was to take Maud on to Victoria. "I shall dream of your delightful scheme of having me with you, at any rate for a while, by day and by night. Not that you are in the least bound to me, for no one knows what may happen."

"I am glad you enjoyed your visit," said Andrée, with a quaint smile, "for I greatly fear you will never be asked again."

"And, pray, why not?" asked Maud, in a slightly indignant tone.

"Because you flirted too daringly with Charlie Landon."

"Flirted!" in a high key. "I don't flirt—not that I am aware of."

"Very probably; but conscious or unconscious you seconded Charlie's attempts remarkably well."

"He is very nice, and doesn't dislike *me*," this in a dreamy tone. "Still, you don't call that flirtation, do you?"

"Then what is? So be prepared for a blank in the way of invitations from the Landons."

"Set them up, indeed!" exclaimed Maud. "I am as good as they are, any day! Not that I should ever give a thought to a boy like that."

"Don't take it seriously," said Andrée. "Ah, here is the house; how quickly we have come."

They kissed and parted, Andrée promising to bring Lilly back to school on the following Tuesday.

. . . . .

The guests had departed after a small brilliant dinner at Lady Sarah Temple's—to be invited to one of which was a kind of hall-mark on the individual who was bidden to the feast. Richard Landon was often among the privileged, but not invariably. When he was, he usually remained, after the others had departed, for a little private discussion of the guests, and current scandal.

A pause had occurred in the talk, and Lady Sarah, after thinking for a minute, said abruptly:

“Your little heiress deigned to take tea with me on Sunday.”

“Yes, she said she was coming.”

“Have you seen her since?”

“No, Lady Sarah.”

“I don't think you are playing your cards well in that quarter.”

“Have I any cards to play?”

“You know best whether you have or not, but I think she is worth your attention. Miss Nugent helped me over the afternoon very nicely. She is well bred, decidedly well bred. Of course, one can see she has not been much in society. She is not commonplace, and, though she is exceedingly gentle, I suspect she is as plucky as—I am myself, though she has not seen everyone give way to her all her life, which makes fearlessness habitual. You want to get too much for, not your money, Richard, but for your value. Such a girl as Andrée Nugent might be a most helpful wife.”

“Unfortunately on this subject one is obliged to speak in the subjunctive mood. You know she has only brutal gold—no connection, no distinction, no support——”

“Except mine!” interrupted Lady Sarah, with an imperious wave of her fan, “and I am not without influence, I suppose?”

"My dear Lady Sarah——"

"Yes, yes! I know I could be of use to your wife. Then consider your advantages: there is literally no one to interfere with you! Go in and win, my dear Richard."

"If she only knew what a precipitate ass I have been how she would jeer at me," thought Richard; "but she never shall."

"Your advice is always of importance in my eyes, dear Lady Sarah. I will do my best to win my—no, not fair cousin!"

"Not fair! pooh! nonsense! Give her a little more training in society—good society—and I shouldn't wonder if she turned out a charming woman. She seems very English, but her French blood tells. Who was her mother?"

"Her name was d'Hautheville, I think. A girl without a *sou*."

"No matter! Her daughter has something of the gentle, dignified repose of manner which high-bred Frenchwomen possess. We spoke French together. It is an age since I heard or spoke it, and her French is excellent. If she chose I should not object to introduce her, but I cannot quite make her out. I suppose she hardly knows what she wants. Don't let her escape your grasp, Richard."

"You certainly fire me with the ambition to succeed in winning the heiress. I'll try my chance, but I don't think I have much."

"No mock modesty!" cried Lady Sarah, looking at him sharply. "It strikes me you are not quite frank," she added. "You have been gambling on the Stock Exchange?"

"Who said so?"

"A well-informed person. Is it true?"

"It is."

"Mind you do not burn your fingers! Miss Nugent, it seems, knows Thurston, the war correspondent every one has been talking about."

"Yes; he was a sort of comrade of her father's, himself a scamp of no mean scampishness."

"I asked her to bring him here—for he is a remarkable man—but I am glad to hear he is out of health, and is gone to the South of Europe to recruit. This Thurston, Richard, might be a dangerous rival."

"Hardly! I believe he is no longer young. He is a widower, with a daughter; and these newspaper correspondents are generally rugged, rough-muzzled fellows not fit to amble in a lady's chamber."

"The longer I live," returned Lady Sarah, in a tone of abstract reflection, "the more I see how little men understand women—also how little women understand men. There is really no sympathy between us, except so far as we mutually administer to each other's vanity."

"I daresay you are right," said Richard.

"I am going out of town for a month or more," continued Lady Sarah, "but shall return before Easter; then, whatever *you* decide, *I* shall take Miss Nugent up, and introduce her to people before the rush of the season is too great to permit recognition or recollection or anything but confusion."

"If she is wise she will gladly seize such an opportunity."

"If—a good deal depends on 'if'—and in this case—but there isn't a girl in the world who would not give their souls,—no, their eyes,—to be well launched in London society."

## CHAPTER XII.

### CONVALESCENCE.

THE February of that year was a month of exceptionally bad weather, rain-storms, cutting east winds, all that is most objectionable in the English climate seemed to have turned up at its worst side; everyone was depressed and cross, and all quarrels were more embittered.

To Andrée, however, the time went swiftly and pleasantly. Was she not independent of weather in her comfortable little brougham? and bad as it was, there were many days on which it was not cruelty to man and beast to take it out to Alton House and spend an hour or two with Lilly and Maud, gathering materials for the weekly report she despatched to John Thurston. The pleasure of writing these was great, but second still, to the interest of his letters, in which he described his impressions of travel and discussed most things touching himself, his child, and Andrée's affairs.

Then came the excitement of his letters to the "Morning News," which appeared every now and then under the leading "Out of the Way Corners."

Andrée found that the more she asserted herself, the more was yielded to her. In fact, the date at which she was to come of age was drawing so near that it was little or no use interfering with her, and Mr. Landon felt it was wiser not to oppose her fancies. She therefore cul-



tivated Mrs. Damer's acquaintance as much as she liked, and spent many agreeable hours in her cheerful home-like house.

Of the Landon party Richard only was satisfied with the condition of things. Andrée seemed to have forgotten that he had ever asked her to marry him; she was friendly and unembarrassed in her manner, and quite ready to go to theatre or concert whenever he suggested taking her; sometimes with, and sometimes without the chaperonage of Emily. But he did not perceive that a very confidential tone had grown up between herself and his brother, who did little commissions for her, picked up old books, and, whenever business permitted, accompanied her to picture exhibitions.

March was now upon them, and Richard was looking forward to the accession of a powerful ally in Lady Sarah Temple, who was coming to town the following week, and whose influence would, no doubt, wean Andrée from the pernicious company of the Damers. When one evening he had come unexpectedly to dinner, he was met by the intelligence that Miss Nugent had been taken suddenly ill, having fainted the day before, and been sent to bed by the doctor. This was the beginning of a bad and tedious attack of influenza, and it was more than a month before Andrée was allowed out of doors.

All Lady Sarah's plans were, therefore, of no avail, much to her and Richard Landon's annoyance.

Hitherto Andrée's health had been excellent, and amongst the chances and changes he had calculated he had never included an attack of illness.

Then the doctors advised an immediate change to the seaside, or to the Continent. Andrée preferred the former, and begged Mrs. Landon to accompany her; a request which pleased that lady. Altogether it seemed

ery doubtful if there was much chance of a season in own that year for Andrée.

It was a very lonely depressing time to her, that spell of indisposition. She would not allow Maud to come to her as she feared the possibility of infection for Lilly. Mrs. Damer was not allowed to see her, and it was for some weeks impossible to write to Thurston, she therefore delegated the task of writing the weekly report to Laud.

The break in the family routine, caused by Andrée's temporary disappearance from the domestic circle, gave Mr. Landon time and inclination to reflect on the state of affairs. When he took his niece to be a member of his household, he vaguely expected more satisfactory results. He reckoned that it would be their own faults if she did not marry either Richard or Charlie. He also took it for granted that a poor helpless, friendless, inexperienced creature, brought up in beggary and obscurity, would be utterly subservient to his own and his wife's influence. He therefore amazed and almost stunned him to find that she had a will and ideas, both very distinct, and that she was by no means overwhelmed by the grandeur and severe respectability of Chichester Gardens, nay, that mentally she sat in judgment on himself. Mr. Landon was not a bad man; he loved money heartily, but he knew the value of things too well to do wrong for its sake. He was as incapable of doing an unprincipled act as of doing a generous one; so, when he began to understand his niece, he perceived that it would be impossible to establish any hold upon her; he felt that she would not even leave her affairs in his hands, and that his best line of conduct would be to yield to her wishes and let her go free. He still hoped that some profit might accrue to the family from her friendly relations with his sons. As to his

daughter, he was satisfied as to her future, for, during Andrée's seclusion in her own chamber, the flirtation which had smouldered between her and their neighbour, young Lorrimer, for a couple of years, came to a head, and he proposed for the fair Emily in due form.

These were tidings which greeted Andrée when she came downstairs to the quiet morning-room. They did not affect her much. Of the Landons, Emily was the one she liked least; the only one to whom she never seemed welcome.

There was a strain of commonness in the daughter of the house which repelled her, and neither had ever advanced beyond the coldest civility towards the other.

Yet she felt for the loneliness this marriage would entail upon Mrs. Landon, who was fond of her daughter, and who was no doubt blind to the imperfections so patent to Andrée.

The first outsider who succeeded in gaining admittance to the convalescent was Mrs. Kellett, who, in a sense, stormed the entrance.

"Well, dear!" she exclaimed, having, much to her surprise, kissed Andrée effusively, "I am thankful to see you so far yourself again; one can see that you have suffered a great deal—you are awfully pulled down."

"I suppose so. The worst suffering was weakness and depression; I hardly cared to get well again."

"That is extraordinary, considering all you have to make life delightful. A fine fortune, a clever brain, and just the sort of woman to attract men, which is always amusing; if you don't care to go on living I don't know who would."

Andrée laughed feebly. "I should not have included the last ingredient in your catalogue, Mrs. Kellett, *had I been you.*"

"Why not? I am sure your cousin, Dick Landon, was quite distracted about you when you were at the worst, and he is a rather stony-hearted fellow."

"Not worse than other young men, I suppose," carelessly.

"Doesn't like a word against him, I see," said Mrs. Kellett to herself. "Oh, they are all hard enough, but very few have so keen an eye to their own interest as Dick. I have seen so much of him since we came to live in the Gardens. My husband is wonderfully fond of him. I like him, too, and he has always been very nice to me; but he would never let his feelings run away with him. When we first came here he was very much gone on Dolly Jones; they lived where the Lorrimers live now. Old Jones was accounted very rich, and the daughter was pretty, but a frog for coldness. Mr. Jones was a shareholder in the North-Western Bank, and it went smash one day. Of course Jones lost everything—all he had in it, and all he hadn't, for of course a shareholder is liable to the depositors' claims,—and they disappeared, no one knows where. Dick soon got over his fancy, I assure you, and didn't trouble much more."

"I suppose he inherits his father's prudence. But do banks often smash? Is there not a saying 'Safe as the bank, or a bank'?"

"That might have been when the saying was invented, but not now; everything is liable to smash up now."

"That is dreadful!" said Andrée. "Pray how are your children, Mrs. Kellett? does your little boy keep strong and well?"

"Yes, thank you; we have sent him to school at Margate—splendid air, and an excellent table. He will be quite right there. I had a time with him in the winter. *The girl is the best of the two now.*

The talk then wandered to the Damers, of whom Mrs. Kellett spoke rather slightly as people quite out of society, as they lived in an out-of-the-way place and could not give dinners.

"I have dined with them, and met very agreeable people at their house," said Andrée.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. Kellett. "I knew you drank tea with them. I always ask them to dinner twice a year, for my husband considers Mr. Damer a rising man."

A little further talk respecting Andrée's intended change of air, and then both ladies were astonished by a message solemnly delivered by the parlour-maid: "If you please 'm, Lady Sarah Temple is below in her carriage, and wishes to know if you will see her?"

"Oh, Mrs. Kellett, I must!" exclaimed Andrée apologetically.

"Yes, of course. I'll clear out."

"Pray ask Lady Sarah to come in," said Andrée.

"I am afraid you will be awfully tired, and she is such an awful old woman," returned Mrs. Kellett, making for the door, where she nearly ran against her ladyship, to whom she dropped a curtsy. It was acknowledged by a full stare and a slight bow, and Mrs. Kellett vanished.

"How very wrong of you to be ill and shut up just when I returned to town," said Lady Sarah, with a smile that sometimes came to her lips when she was neither cross nor scornful nor mocking, but friendly and forgetful of self. Then she sat down, and talked pleasantly for a quarter of an hour.

Meanwhile Mrs. Kellett peeped into the drawing-room, where she found Richard Landon standing before the fire in what she herself termed "a brown study."

"I guessed you would come with your old lady," she

ried, advancing, and catching a satisfactory glimpse of herself in a long glass at the end of the room, which reflected a neat little figure admirably arranged in a winter costume of blue velvet and cashmere, and a pretty pink and white face surmounted by a fluff of golden hair framed in an exceedingly becoming bonnet, also of blue velvet; 'was it quite wise to let her see Miss Nugent? She gives me the idea of the wolf masquerading as Red Riding Hood's grandmother.'

"Lady Sarah and Miss Nugent seem to get on very well together; you need not be uneasy. How did you find her invalid?"

"Better, she says; bad enough, according to her looks. Illness is trying enough to a pretty woman, but it's an awful disfigurement to a plain one. Miss Nugent looks a hundred."

"Ah, then you see every one knows she is not. With youth on her side she will soon recover."

"You have not asked me how *I* am, Richard."

"It is unnecessary; you are the picture of health and happiness."

"Happiness! Well, perhaps so! And how do you get on with the heiress, Dick?"

"Under the present circumstances no one could get on with her; but we are on very good terms."

"I tried to put in a word for you, Dick; I said what old friends we were, and what a nice, disinterested fellow you were. Law, Dick, she is as cold as a stone!"

"My dear Mrs. Kellett, I should be infinitely obliged if you would abstain from advocating my cause. Miss Nugent has more brains than the ordinary run of women, and has been trained in a very realistic school."

"She could not have been in a more select school than I was; but I suppose I am one of the ordinary run of

state of your affairs, and report to you on the condition in which I resign my trust. In fact, I should prefer this, and shall be happy to recommend a suitable person to manage your affairs."

"Thank you, Mr. Landon," said Andrée gently, and feeling less hard against him than usual, for his proposition had relieved her of the unpleasant and ungracious task of dismissing him. "I daresay you are right, though I am sure you have done the best you could for me in every way, and I hope always to be on friendly terms with you and yours. When I feel better able to think I shall speak to you again on the subject. As to my living with Miss Analy, we are both very quiet in our habits. I do not think we shall create a scandal."

"I trust not! I trust not!" returned Mr. Landon.

The next week Andrée and Mrs. Landon went to Southsea, establishing themselves at that well-known and most comfortable house "The Anchor Hotel," which looks out across the Solent on the gently rising wooded coast of the Isle of Wight.

It was a bright, balmy afternoon at the end of April when they arrived, and Andrée's heart had never felt so light, so full of happy anticipations before.

The place is not beautiful, apart from the outlook above-mentioned, but the sense of space, the balmy air, the unusual life and movement created by the near neighbourhood of a large seaport and garrison town, the coming and going of grand war-ships, of busy, bustling steamers, of elegant patrician yachts, gave a feeling of freedom, of being on the highway to "everywhere," that was exceedingly pleasant and cheering. Before she was there a week Andrée was strong enough to take a turn on foot along the raised footway which separates the common from the beach, and, as April seemed trying to atone for the cruel-

of February and March, she was able to sit out of doors and watch the changing aspects of the ever-varying sky, while she inhaled the delicious briny softness of the sea breeze.

Mrs. Landon also was happy to a degree that surprised herself, and puzzled her too, for she honestly believed the presence of her family, or some of them at least, was quite essential to her comfort and contentment, whereas it was their absence that made the change so agreeable. After a certain time of separation she would, without doubt, yearn to see them again, but for the present the necessity of all things had its advantages.

"My dear Maud," wrote Andrée, when she had been nearly ten days at Southsea, "your account of Lilly makes me a little anxious. These pale cheeks and languor, her aversion to lessons, and inclination to cry and fret about trifles, show an 'out of order' condition which may lead to anything. I am glad you have written fully to your father; a letter from me will go by the same post, urging him to let her come to me, as I am sure the routine of a school is not suited to such a delicate child. The air here is heavenly, and I am now quite myself; in fact, my recovery from that fiendish malady, influenza, has been unusually quick. I have been delightfully busy looking after the garden, which has helped to invigorate me. At this season there is a large and almost embarrassing choice, but according to my notions of cost and value I find them all dear. My ideas on the subject are, however, expand-

"As I want something not large, but roomy; not grand, but pretty and picturesque; light and airy, but not glaring; not finely furnished, but tastefully and harmoniously, it has not been easy to find just the right thing. The search will no doubt end with a compromise, but I think I have found what will do, with a little out-



side help in the way of pretty things. It is a semi-detached villa with a charming view over the sea to the Island, and belongs to an elderly couple. The husband was a gentleman's servant, and the wife a cook; they keep a nice-looking maid, so we shall have no trouble about domestics, which is, I believe, a great advantage. I hope to have a letter approving my plan for Lilly by return of post from Mr. Thurston, who will probably also write to Miss Jansen; then, dear Maud, pack up and come as soon as ever you can. How happy we shall be at home together, and how dear little Lilly will thrive in this delightful air!"

A few more particulars as to her arrangements, and Andrée closed her letter.

She began to wish she could release Mrs. Landon, who, though she had rarely enjoyed herself so much as during her stay with her niece, was afraid she ought to return in order to set about that great undertaking, Emily's trousseau.

Finally a long letter came as quickly as it could from John Thurston, full of hearty pleasure at having such good news of her recovery from Andrée herself, and informing her that he had written to Miss Jansen explaining matters, and desiring that his little daughter should be placed under Miss Nugent's care.

As to Maud, she had stayed on from week to week to suit the convenience of her employer, and there was consequently no difficulty about her leaving. So Andrée had soon the joy of receiving her friend and her little *protégée* in her temporary home.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### HALCYON DAYS.

"Yes," said Andrée, looking down into the neat little garden, where, sheltered by a high paling on the eastern side, some evergreens and flowering shrubs flourished unusually well for Southsea, and where Lilly, in company with an amiable old retriever who belonged to the house, was digging in a corner allotted to her, "she looks far from well or strong. I hope Mr. Thurston will not return before we win back the roses to her cheek." She was sitting with Maud Anely in the veranda on which their drawing and dining-rooms opened, and whence, as it looked west, a pleasant view of the Solent, the Island, the church towers and buildings of Portsmouth, softened in the hazy distance, could be seen.

"I fancy she looks brighter already," returned Maud, opening her work-basket and taking out a large piece of work—a summer frock, in short, for the young lady under discussion. "What a delightful place this is! I feel I could dance here, and sing, if I had not too much respect for public opinion. I was so terribly anxious about you, Andrée, for there is no knowing what that dreadful influenza may lead up to. So was Mr. Thurston. He was always asking for news, and abusing me for not writing often enough! I am so thankful you seem like yourself, only thinner."

"I feel better than I did before my illness, thank God."

"If you knew how delightful it is not to hear the 'getting up' bell,—to wake at six and remember you have only to turn round again and go to sleep again until you are called! I had grown very weary of school; but after a little rest I shall be quite ready to go on again. I never think of the future; it would be folly for me to do so."

"Why?"

"Because it would only disable me for the present. Besides, it is my nature to enjoy to-day, for which I thank heaven. It may be imprudent to forget to-morrow, but to remember it perpetually is a source of weakness. Do you admire my philosophy?"

"There is something in it," said Andrée, thoughtfully. "I am a little inclined to worry about the future. Lilly," interrupting herself, "do not take off your hat, dear, the air is not warm enough."

Lilly looked up from her digging, nodded, and obeyed.

These were halcyon days for Andrée; the tranquillity, the absence of all care or fear for the future, the sense of making some little return for Thurston's goodness to her father and herself in the days of old, the hope of seeing him before long, lulled her into a state of blissful content. She and Maud used to make the loveliest schemes for the future after Lilly had gone to bed and the soft twilight closed round them as they sat in the balcony and watched the lights glimmering out one after another on one of the ships anchored in the roadstead beneath their windows; while their days were diversified by expeditions to the Isle of Wight, drives to Porchester, and over the downs which encircle the old seaport, to the rich country beyond; and, as the evenings grew longer, boating, under

he guidance and care of an experienced old salt especially recommended by Andrée's landlord, who constituted himself guardian of his young tenants.

The Saturday after Maud and her little pupil had arrived it had been a little blowy and threatening, so Andrée had decided to walk on the common instead of venturing far from shelter, and Maud had already put on Lilly's hat and cape, when Macfie, the landlord, suddenly threw open the door, and announced in a sonorous voice :

"Mr. Landon!" whereupon Richard entered in his usual well-dressed condition, with an amiable smile lighting up his countenance.

On beholding Maud he paused, and his face changed.

"Didn't expect to see me," she thought, and hastened to say, "I will let Miss Nugent know;" and stepping through the window to the veranda, passed through the lining-room to Andrée's chamber, which she entered with laughing eyes.

"Oh, Andrée! your very elegant cousin, Mr. Richard Landon, has just arrived! I wish you could have seen his look of disgust when he found *me* instead of the lady of his dreams. Come and see him. I will take Lilly out, and leave you to talk. Can I do more?"

Andrée laughed.

"No, indeed, it is too much! Do not go far—turn at the flagstaff, I shall come and meet you."

So saying, and without removing her large, shady summer hat, she went to the drawing-room.

"Why, Richard! this is an unexpected pleasure," she said graciously. "You ought to have warned me of your coming, and I should have had dinner ready for you. We live in a very primitive style—a midday meal, and high tea; quite a nursery existence."

"Do not let that trouble you; I daresay they can give

me something fit to eat at the hotel. I should have been here a couple of days sooner, but was unavoidably detained. I have been rather anxious to see for myself how you have been getting on. You know it is rather a desperate experiment staying here all alone, save for that rather showy young lady whom I found here, and who is peculiarly unfitted to play the part of *demoiselle de compagnie*."

"No, she certainly does not look the part," returned Andrée; "but I do, and probably everyone takes me for Miss Analy's companion, so the proprieties are kept up, which is all that is necessary."

"You really think this?" said Richard, looking earnestly at her, with an unmistakable expression of pleasure in his eyes.

"I do, indeed," she returned, and proceeded to inquire for his mother and sister.

"I am glad to find you looking quite yourself, Andrée," he continued. "It seems such an age since I saw you. I wanted very much to come down while my mother was here, but I could not manage it. Lady Sarah sent many messages. She does not understand why you choose to bury yourself here, and has quite exhausted her powers of penetration and the index of her experience in the effort to discover your motives. You are rapidly falling into disgrace with her."

"I must try and make my peace with her, for she has been very kind to me. Now, Richard, I was, as you see, going out. The wind has fallen, and it will be very pleasant along the beach. Will you come with me, or do you want to dine first?"

"Perish dinner," said Richard, laughing, "when there is the alternative of a walk with you."

"Nevertheless, you must dine; but as it is only a few

minutes' walk to the hotel, come and have some coffee with us afterwards." He accepted the invitation readily, and they set out towards the flagstaff, Richard apparently much pleased with the air, the view, the sunset—everything in short.

Presently they came in sight of Maud and Lilly. "Oh, there is Lilly," cried Andrée.

"Pray," asked Richard in an altered tone, "is it true that you intend to adopt that child?"

"No, certainly not. I am thankful to say she has a father who is able and most willing to take care of her. But were she an orphan I should feel strongly tempted to commit that imprudence." Richard was silent, and Lilly ran to meet them; Andrée added, "Is she not a pretty child? she is so like her mother, who was a sweet creature. Mr. Landon, Miss Analy; I am not sure if you have met before."

By Andrée's suggestion they turned and strolled in the direction of the hotel, where they left Richard, who had done his best to be agreeable, but with an effort he could not quite conceal.

He returned for the promised coffee, and things went more easily. Then Maud went to put Lilly to bed, and at Richard's request Andrée went to the piano to play a dreamy serenade of which he was very fond: the repose, the stillness, the faint sound of the rippling tide, seemed very sweet and soothing even to his worldly, sensuous nature. Presently Maud returned, rousing a sense of annoyance and irritation in the mind of their guest. She took up a piece of fancy work, and had hardly began it when once again the door opened to admit a guest, and once again "Mr. Landon" was announced.

Maud could not resist laughing aloud at Richard's

blank amazement. Andrée left the piano with an exclamation of pleasure, and greeted Charlie warmly.

"You here!" he cried to Richard, when he had spoken to Maud; "I thought you had gone down to Henley to stay with the Martins?"

"Well, you see, I did not," was the rather short reply.

"I intended to be here a couple of hours earlier, but I was delayed at the office and missed my train; then I stopped to take some dinner;—but here I am, delighted to have a breath of fresh air after the dust and crowd of London," said Charlie. There was no "doing" the agreeable, no sense of irritation about him. He was unaffectedly joyous; told all the news, all the gossip, he could think of; sang his favourite songs, including a duet with Maud, and entered eagerly into a discussion of plans for the morrow; at last Andrée told them it was late, and they departed together.

As soon as they were well clear of the house Richard turned to his brother and demanded in a savage tone—

"What the devil brought *you* here?"

"And what the deuce brought *you*?" retorted Charlie.

"You know! I have a right to visit my cousin, and I don't want to be interfered with."

"Just my case, Dick! I have a right to visit my cousin, and *I* don't want to be interfered with."

"Do you mean to say," exclaimed Richard more calmly, and recovering his self-control, "that you have entered yourself for the Nugent Stakes?"

"Why not? by what right do you count on a 'walk over'?"

"The right of primogeniture," returned Richard, with an unpleasant smile. "I think I come first in more than *the accident* of birth,—I have more experience, a better

position, besides being more suited to Andrée by intellect and character."

"You are all wrong," retorted the younger brother; "you may be older, which implies more experience, but I deny that you are in a better position, or so good a one as I am. You are a briefless barrister, admitted into a society higher than you belong to by the favour of a capricious old dowager of fashion, from which you may be pushed any day, for you have scarce a foothold. I shall be a partner in a well-established firm; and as to being the young lady's inferior mentally, I am not such a fool as I seem to *you*; and if I were, what does it matter, suppose she takes a fancy to me, as clever women have to idiots before now. I can tell you *I* am her favourite in the family, why shouldn't I have my chance? Look, Richard, let us play fair, and abide by the girl's choice. I am not going to knock under to you always."

"There can be no fair play in such a game. So I am to consider you a rival?"

Charlie nodded. "Better be plain and explicit about it," he said.

Richard was silent for a few minutes. He was immensely annoyed. He had counted largely on the advantage he possessed in the absence of other men and the isolation of Andrée from society, and here was a rival quite as well placed as himself, and who, moreover, had never put himself wrong by a premature proposal. Was it possible that Andrée Nugent could have the bad taste to prefer an insignificant young solicitor, who was even boyish of his years, to a man of the world with cultivated brains and high ambition?—no, it was impossible! That young idiot, Charlie, had no business to cross his elder brother; he (Richard) would speak to his father on the subject. It was all nonsense—absurd presumption. Still,



it enraged the exalted elder brother so much, that he lost something of his usual keenness, and did not perceive the lack of seriousness in Charlie's tone, though that young gentleman put on an air of great determination. They parted moodily, without exchanging a good-night, and never having been really friends, drifted further apart than ever.

At "The Laurels,"—as Andrée's abode had been named, in honour of its evergreens,—as soon as the guests were out of the way, Maud sat down on the nearest chair and gave way to a fit of merry laughter.

"It was really too funny," she exclaimed, "the dismay and disgust of each brother at the sight of the other. Mr. Landon was the worst of the two. They don't love each other. But, Andrée, do they *both* want to marry you?"

"Oh, no! certainly not Charlie."

"Well, I should prefer him; I do not like the other at all."

"Well, I do, rather; he can make himself very agreeable."

"Exactly; it is the 'making' that takes off the freshness! Now Charlie—I mean Mr. Charles Landon—cannot help being pleasant."

"No. He does not seem to belong to the Landons; he is so much younger in nature than any of them."

"Nor will he be as successful as his brother; he enjoys himself too much and forgets himself too much to impose on other people. I do hope it will be bright and breezy to-morrow. Of all our plans, I should like a sail best; it would take us quite away from all the crowd, the Sunday visitors, and the dust; but we must take Lilly."

"Yes, of course; I never dreamed of leaving her behind, though she is very happy with Evans. [Evans was

her maid.] I ought to have had a letter from Mr. Thurston; he said he should be able to speak more decidedly as to his plans in his next."

"Where was he when he wrote?"

"At Ravenna, and intended having a look at the lakes. We must see Italy before I settle down anywhere, Maud. But I am always building castles; I shall go to bed and dream instead. Good-night, Maud."

The weather was propitious next day, and the steady old boatman provided a large sailing-boat, with a competent mate to assist him, while the obliging Macfie put the wherewithal for a comfortable luncheon on board, and all promised well for a pleasant day, but to Richard it was spoiled by the necessity he felt for watchfulness, and the careful counteracting of Charlie's audacious pretensions. As the hours sped on he was delighted to perceive that Andrée seemed quite willing to walk—when they landed at a picturesque little hamlet—with him and talk to him, taking little or no notice of his brother; who, to cover his temporary defeat, devoted himself to Lilly, who took to him readily; and this move, of course, took in the insignificant governess, so that, when ashore, Richard practically enjoyed a *tête-à-tête* with his cousin, and even on board the boat the little party fell into two groups. Richard confessed to himself that Andrée never bored him. There was an appreciative intelligence about her eminently agreeable to a man that believed so profoundly in himself; whereas she frequently disputed Charlie's opinions, and argued with him freely. On the whole, things looked very satisfactory throughout what proved a pleasanter day to Richard than he had anticipated; and when Charlie said good-night and good-bye, as he was to start at some fabulously early hour next morning, Richard returned his valediction with good humour, not un-

tinged by contempt. He did not, however, happen to hear some of Andrée's parting words to his brother; they were "Come and see us when you can, Charlie."

The following afternoon Richard Landon also took his leave, and the friends were left to their usual quiet but happy routine. This routine, however, did not last long uninterrupted.

Two days later, as they had nearly finished their early dinner, a telegram was brought to Andrée, who opened it, and, uttering an exclamation, read as follows: "Charing Cross Hotel. Just arrived; will be with you to-morrow evening," and signed "Thurston." "Ah! This accounts for his silence. Lilly, dear, father is coming! Will it not be delightful to have him here?"

"Oh, yes, auntie! He will come out sailing with us every day!"

"This is very sudden," remarked Maud; "he has said nothing about returning in his letters."

"No; only vague hopes that his exile would soon be over." And Andrée lapsed into a happy reverie. The sudden giddy joy which filled her heart told her how much she had longed to see her old friend again, how all that she had done or intended to do had reference to him—the only bit, and the best bit, of her old life saved from the wreck.

"Thank God, he will find Lilly looking well and strong," she exclaimed, as that young person ran off to tell the news to Evans. "His heart is quite bound up in that child, and he has been so little with her. I wish he had some more settled employment—I mean something to keep him in England, so that Lilly might be with him."

"That would not be so easy to manage," returned *Maud*. "It would not be good for her to be without

young companions, and he would be obliged to have some ogre of a woman to keep his house, or marry again."

"Marry again!" echoed Andrée slowly. "I do not think John Thurston will ever marry again! If you knew, as I do, how he loved his wife, you would feel with me that it was impossible he could care for another."

"I do not see why he should not, Andrée. Why must he mourn for ever? It must be five years or more since he was left alone, and there are long years of loneliness before him; a child like Lilly cannot be a companion, and as soon as she is old enough to be one she will probably marry and go off to be the companion of some other man. The better and tenderer the heart, the greater its necessity for some one to love."

"Perhaps," returned Andrée, thoughtfully; and she went to talk with their landlady about dinner and dainties; for woman's first thought, when she hears of a male visitor coming, is of food.

With what pleasure and interest both girls arranged what Lilly was to wear, and how she could be made to look her best! They talked to the child, too, about the dear father, and tried to inspire her with joy at the prospect of his coming; but Lilly had been too much away from her only parent to have that sense of intimacy and clinging affection which only the habit of being together develops.

It was long before Andrée could sleep that night. The anticipation of seeing John Thurston again, of talking with and consulting him, was too delightful to permit of rest or forgetfulness. How changed he was by sorrow and struggle; yet the longer she talked with him, the more frequently the man she knew long ago looked out at her from behind the mask of the present. How well she understood this eager anxiety to provide for his deli-

cate little girl before "the night came" in which he could not work. "I can help him in that," she thought; "but I must do it without his knowledge; at least, he shall not know until it is done." Then her thoughts reverted to Maud's almost sacrilegious idea that John might, and probably would, marry! Yet he was comparatively a young man, and men seldom find memory sufficient company. Whoever he might choose to fill the vacant place at his side, would find, even in his second-hand affection, a mine of gold; and, with an earnest prayer that he might find enough happiness to reward him for the sorrows of the past, she at last fell asleep.

The next day, as it is sometimes, even in summer, was wet and stormy, with sudden bursts of wind, nevertheless Maud managed to get as far as the village, and returned with a basket full of flowers; so the rooms looked bright and pretty, and a wood fire was blazing and crackling in the drawing-room as seven o'clock drew near.

By simultaneous suggestion Andrée and her friend decided that Lilly was to be left alone in the drawing-room to receive her father, that his feelings might not be restrained by the presence of on-lookers.

When the traveler therefore entered the pretty, comfortable room, with its perfumed decorations, its books, its piano, its look of being inhabited, the glow of the burning logs contrasting with the gloomy, blustery weather outside, he felt, what he had not felt for years, that he had come home; and the illusion was complete when a little figure in white, with a soft blue sash, and beautifully brushed wavy golden hair, came forward smiling, yet timid, to greet him, and offer him a shy kiss. Was this bright-eyed little lady, with a healthy tinge of colour in her cheeks, and the look of being watchfully cared for, the little pale,

thin, silent, depressed child he had left some three months ago?

"My own darling," he cried, catching her up, "I have longed to see you and hold you in my arms! Are you glad to see father again?"

"Oh, yes!" putting hers softly round his neck, and returning his kisses willingly. "We are all glad! We have been arranging the flowers. I put all in that bowl, see, on the little table in the window; and Maud put on my best frock—my best in-door frock, you know. Auntie said I was to be the first to see you, because you belong to me."

"Yes, my sweet, I do! And you are quite strong and well now, Lilly?" looking at her with eager, loving eyes, which grew moist as he noted the close resemblance to her beloved mother.

"Oh, yes! I can walk all along the beach to old Jack's cottage, and I come back quite hungry. Maud gives me no lessons now, except a little music, and I like that; she reads to me, and sometimes I read to auntie."

"And you will play to me, to poor father, who has been so long away?"

"Yes, to-morrow," said the child shyly, "when Maud sits beside me. I make many mistakes," she added, twisting her fingers together.

"Oh, never mind that! Now, kiss father again! You will try to love him, will you not, my darling?"

"Yes, I will try!"

"Now go and bring auntie."

The little one ran off readily, and soon returned leading Andrée.

"How can I ever thank you enough," began Thurston, as soon as they had exchanged greetings, "for all your

good care of this child! She looks a new creature! so healthy, so bright, and not nearly so strange with me as I expected."

"A great share of your thanks are due to Maud Anally," said Andrée, looking up into his red-brown face and kind grey eyes, her heart beating high with joy. "I cannot tell you what pains she has taken to improve our precious pet in every way. She is so childlike in many ways herself that she is an admirable child's guide. I do the severe monitor—not that your dear child needs severity; I wish she were a little naughtier," she added, looking round and seeing that Lilly had left the room.

Thurston did not trust himself to speak for a minute or too; he walked towards the door and back, and then said: "This is the nearest approach to a home-coming I have known—since—that is, for years. I am thankful you carried out your intention of setting up on your own hook, and that Landon had the sense to let you anticipate your majority. You are all right again, I hope? you seem to have had a bad bout of it, Andrée."

"I am rather better than before I was ill; generally I am in excellent health."

"I suspect that sound sense is one source of sound health," returned Thurston.

"And your own?" asked Andrée.

"I am quite well and strong." Andrée thought he looked so. He seemed younger than when he first returned from Egypt; his eyes were clearer, and had their old keen flashing light; he was, she thought, straighter, and broader about the shoulders. "In fact, I might have returned four or five weeks ago, but I had some papers to write for my own editor and for one of the weeklies, and the price was tempting. I never lose a chance of making money. The reason I started for home (I feel it is home

now) so suddenly is that Starkey, our chief editor, wrote to tell me that Cloudesley and Watkins (the men who do most in travels, biography, and that line of book) had offered a decent price for my Egyptian letters, so I hurried home to revise them and see them through the press."

"I am equally glad of your coming and the cause," said Andrée, with a bright sweet smile. "You will stay in England for some time?"

"I hope so. Indeed, I shall endeavour to arrange matters so that I may make it my headquarters. It grows harder each year to leave the child. Yet I can hardly have her to live with me for the present; it would entail too much of an establishment."

"For the present leave her with Maud and me," said Andrée, with the gentle decision which made all her speech impressive.

"My dear girl! you are too kind, too generous! And when the poor little soul has grown to love you, to feel your home hers, you will go and marry some lucky fellow, and she will be left lamenting."

"That is not likely to happen soon," returned Andrée calmly; "but in the meantime we will discuss it all fully," she said, breaking off, for Lilly here re-entered, leading Maud by the hand.

Thurston greeted her warmly; and, as Andrée watched her winning smile, her pretty blush, her sweet frank manner, a sudden sense of her friend's superiority in beauty and fascination seemed to send a curious, unaccountable pang through her heart. She was astonished at herself, and the feeling passed swiftly away; but she sat silent, listening to the interchange of sentences between Thurston and Maud, who always had something to say, and was ever ready to say it, while Lilly sat on her father's knee



gazing earnestly in his face, as if learning it by heart, and at last put her golden head against his breast with a deep sigh of satisfaction.

Then dinner was announced, and in honour of the occasion Lilly was permitted to sit at table.

It was a very happy evening. Lillie played a little German air, with some prompting from Maud, and Thurston gravely approved. Then he carried her upstairs to bed, and gave her into the kindly hands of Evans.

After a moment or two of grave thought on his return, he roused himself and began to speak of his late wanderings, of the various aspects presented by the races amongst whom he had dwelt for the last three months, answering the questions of Maud, with many amusing details, while Andrée listened with a fullness of content such as she had never known before.

"You promised to be a musician, Andrée," said Thurston, breaking from the subject on which he was speaking abruptly. "Do you play or sing?"

"I only play, John."

"Then play for me!"

Andrée went to the piano at once. "Play that serenade of Gounod's," he asked; "I do not know if you remember it. We used all to love it in the old Paris days."

"This?" asked Andrée, touching a few chords.

"Ah! yes, yes!" cried Thurston eagerly. "Play that."

And Andrée played it with infinite expression. Thurston leant back in his chair, listening with closed eyes, and when the music ceased remained silent for some minutes.

"That was good," he said at length in a low voice. "*Something else, Andrée.*" And Andrée played.

Then came some talk of music and musicians, which showed Thurston to be no mean judge; a song or two from Maud followed, and Thurston rose to say good-night.

"I shall come early to-morrow, if you will allow me," he said. "I can only stay two days this time, and I must cultivate my little daughter's acquaintance. Possibly I may be able to do my work down here; that remains to be seen. Good-night, Miss Analy! Good-night, Andrée! I have not had an evening like this for years—years that seemed ages. Good-night!"

"What a delightful man!" cried Maud, when they were alone. "I could listen to him for hours! He seems to know everything, and is so human into the bargain."

## CHAPTER XIV.

### A LITTLE CLOUD.

JOHN THURSTON found he could stay more than two days at Southsea—in fact he stayed four.

He had not felt so peacefully happy for years, not since he had lost his beloved companion. She was much in his thoughts during these days. He thought of her tenderly, but without the bitter, soul-piercing grief her memory used always to create.

Could she see her child she would be content, he mused. The child was the picture of health and happiness. Also, if she knew anything of life below, she must know how hard he had worked, with what self-denial he had lived, in order to earn for her needs now, to store up some provision for her when he should be no more. Now that he felt strong and well he was full of hope. He was not yet forty, his work seemed acceptable in various quarters, why should he not be able to put by a fair portion for his little daughter?

Meantime he took out Lillie alone each afternoon, delighted to find that she had begun to chatter quite freely to him. She was not a talkative child. She would gaze at the sea, or the common and its moving groups of children and soldiers and pedestrians, and then suddenly break into speech, often a repetition of something Maud or Andrée had said to her days before. "Maud says

there are mountains under the sea in some places. Is the Island the top of a big mountain, father?" Or, "Auntie told me there is hardly ever any rain in Egypt. Is that true, father?"

He grew more and more interested in the gentle little darling, but listened eagerly to Maud's suggestions that everything should be done to strengthen and win her from her tendency to dream and feel. "After the holidays, when she has gathered a good stock of health and strength, I would let her go to a very nice school for little boys and girls quite near this. The children go at ten, have dinner there, play in the grounds, which are large, and return home about five. It is not healthy for children to be brought up altogether with old people; and, you see, she can be all the evening at home," said Maud. "I fancy Andrée will stay on here through the winter; after that, I hope, Lilly will be quite ready to enjoy boarding-school life."

"I am sure the advice is excellent, Miss Analy," said Thurston, "but I do not expect Andrée to bury herself in a little place like this in the winter."

"It is very likely I shall stay here through the winter," said Andrée. "Afterwards, when I feel that I am quite my own mistress, I should like to see something of foreign parts. You must sketch out a scheme of travel for us, John."

"Us!" cried Thurston quickly. "Who are you going to take with you?"

"It does not seem to me that Maud, Lilly, and myself can part," said Andrée, smiling. "We are very happy together, and to be happy appears the great object of life, so long as you do not interfere with the happiness of others."

"That is *my* philosophy," returned Thurston. "But

a young girl like you, Andrée, will soon want more excitement than you can get here."

"I do not feel young; I *am* not young," she said, "in the sense of wanting excitement. Tranquillity is infinitely delightful to me. If I want excitement here is an opportunity." She took a letter from her work-basket as she spoke. (They were sitting in the veranda after luncheon, waiting for the cooler hours of the later afternoon.)

"You are a wonderfully restful person, Andrée. One's nerves cool and grow steady in your presence," said Thurston, taking it.

"Read it aloud, John."

"Curious, big, bold, self-willed hand," he said, glancing over the pages; then, in a tone of surprise, he read the signature, "'Sarah Temple.' What! the famous dowager of South Audley Street! This is not an offer to be lightly refused." And he read as follows:

"MY DEAR MISS NUGENT: Richard Landon tells me you have buried yourself in a petty south coast watering place, and we fear your next step will be to enter a convent. Before taking it let me beg you to have another peep at the naughty, unreasonable, fascinating world. This means, will you come and stay with me for a week or ten days? during which I am going to give a ball. You shall see pictures, go to races, hear a debate in the House, and enjoy the society of the newest mashers, besides giving a good deal of pleasure to an old lady.

"Your friend, if you will,

"SARAH TEMPLE"

"What accumulated force of temptation!" cried Thurston. "You ought to be flattered, Andrée. I have

ever had the honour of seeing Lady Sarah, but I have heard of her. How has she happened to cross your path?"

Andrée explained.

"Well, my dear little friend, if you want to enter London society on advantageous terms you could not have a better sponsor than Lady Sarah; and I suppose you are not too exalted for such an ambition?"

"No, John; all sorts of society interests me. But I can find gaieties always, while the peace I have here is rare."

"I think you are the rarest of all yourself!" exclaimed Thurston. "What are you going to say in reply to this invitation?"

"Oh, that I do not yet feel equal to the rush and turmoil of London, which is near enough to the truth."

Thurston was silent for a minute or two, during which a shadow stepped softly through the window into the drawing-room and disappeared.

"Is it possible, Andrée," said Thurston, looking up suddenly, "that you do not love the world, that you are superior to the temptation of its gauds?"

"Indifference does not mean superiority," said Andrée thoughtfully. "I like Lady Sarah. The people of her world amuse and interest me,—at least I think they would,—but I cannot give up the quiet pleasure of my life here even for ten days. We can only call the present our own; if I let this—this bit of life here go, when can I grasp it again? London and Lady Sarah I can always have; and it is such a pleasure, John, to be with you and your dear little girl."

"Andrée," said Thurston, "you are the same you ever were—loyal, and wise with the heart's wisdom; but I did not expect to find you capable of keeping your balance so com-

pletely, even in the disturbing glare of your new fortune. I wonder if these moderate views and desires will last! I must leave you to-morrow, but I shall return next week, and shall bring my work with me. I have written to the office, and will not undertake any other contributions till my book is out. I shall secure a month's quiet, and see my precious little Lilly every day; to say nothing of the joys of your company and that of Miss Analy. You don't know how sweet and fresh the society of two nice English girls seems to me, after years passed among rough, untidy men, in an atmosphere of tobacco smoke. I am not naturally rough."

"I am sure you are not, John; and believe me, we are charmed with the newness of a man's talk—a man's views."

"But had you not two young fellows constantly at the Landons'? Didn't they keep you alive?"

"The atmosphere was too heavy," said Andrée, "and Richard only came occasionally as a guest. He can be agreeable, but somehow does not produce a cheering effect on my mind. Now his brother Charlie does. I am rather fond of Charlie; I will ask him to come down and meet you."

"Do so. I shall be glad to know him," returned Thurston, who had listened with deep attention while Andrée spoke, and then fell into silence. "I have wished to tell you," resumed Andrée, "that I do not intend to leave my affairs in Mr. Landon's hands. It will be awkward to take them from him, but he opened the way himself."

"You are not satisfied with him, then?"

"I am quite sure he would manage them well, and *also* that he is a man of integrity; but I feel a natural antagonism to him, which would make it always unpleas-

ant to me to take counsel with him, and I should like to learn how to manage my own money. I was so long miserably poor that it seems a sacred duty to take care of one's property. Now I fancy I should like Mr. Damer for my 'legal adviser.'"

"You could not have a better man," rejoined Thurston heartily. "He met with terrible losses through the rascality of a partner, but he is picking up again. He is a really honest fellow."

"Then will you ask him if he will undertake me and my affairs?"

"Of course he will be very glad to do so, but I will mention the matter to him."

"Thank you, John. I shall have to go up to town next week to choose a present for Emily Landon, who is to be married in July, and then I shall call on him. You must tell me where his office is."

"Should you like me to go with you?"

Andrée hesitated a moment, and then said, "Thank you very much, I prefer going alone."

"Very well," said Thurston, with a good-humoured laugh. "I admire your frankness and independence."

"I hope you do not think me ungrateful," she answered, the colour rising in her pale cheeks, "but I want very much to depend on myself."

"You are quite right, my dear Andrée. What gratitude do you owe me? you are *my* creditor—only I am such an unprincipled fellow, I never wish to be out of your debt."

"Ah," cried Andrée, "I shall be an exacting creditor!" and she stretched out her hand to him. He took and held it in a friendly pressure, and they began to talk of other things.

*The next morning* Thurston went up to town, and



Andrée heard nothing of him for several days. The weather was wet and rather sultry, with a good deal of thunder; in short, July weather before July was upon them. It was, therefore, impossible to get out as much as usual, and they missed their absent companion greatly.

"He is quite different from all the men I have met, and they have not been many," said Maud, looking through the window at the steady downpour. "And I should be a little afraid of him, only he is so frank and good-natured."

"Yes, he is really gentle, though he looks rough."

Here a servant entered with the letters which had come by the afternoon post—only two for Andrée, none for Miss Analy.

"There is no one to write to me," she said with a sigh. "I have a letter about twice a year from my step-mother; my father, I suppose, forgets I am alive."

"Never mind, Maud; when you go away I shall write to you regularly."

"When I go away! that would be a high price to pay for your correspondence!" cried Maud, smiling, while something like tears glittered in her eyes.

Andrée rose, and, in passing, stooped and kissed her friend's brow. "I do not think we shall part soon, dear. You and Lilly together give me the first 'home' feeling I have known since—since I lost my father! How dark it is," she added, going to the window, "and this note is a little difficult to decipher; a lawyer ought to write a better hand! It is from Charlie Landon; I wrote to ask him to come here on next Saturday, or Friday, if he could manage it, and he writes to say he cannot ask leave till the following week."

"I am so sorry!" exclaimed Maud. "It would do the boy so much good. It is a pity he is chained to the car—

I mean the desk, nearly all the year round. Now I don't suppose he can ride, or shoot, or fish, or row."

"Oh, yes; he rows very well, I imagine, from what Mrs. Kellett says. Do you think all these accomplishments indispensable in a man?"

"Yes, quite!" returned Maud. "I know exactly the sort of man I am going to fall in love with. He must be stern, and dark, and picturesque; he must have hunted and shot in every part of the world; he must ride like—oh, like Dick Turpin, and fence, and be a dead shot, and dance divinely, and be utterly, hopelessly in love with *me!*"

"I am afraid you must seek him in Ouida's novels," said Andrée, laughing. "There is many a fine fellow born to blush unseen and earn his bread with daily diligence in the humble routine of civil life, Maud, who deserves to be loved as well as the ferocious hunting, shooting hero you have described."

"To be loved—oh, yes, I daresay, if he were one's brother; but not to be fallen in love with. How could you make a hero out of a man who goes by omnibus into the city every day of his life, and sits scribbling at a desk all day, then goes home punctually to dine at seven; who never quits the shelter of papa and mamma's roof; never camps out under the free vault of heaven? That's the sort of thing to do, you know! Why, I could manufacture a better hero out of Richard Landon. He has the airs of a man of the world, he rides and shoots, thanks to that wonderful work of art, Lady Sarah. Only I dislike him so much."

"Why, Maud?"

"'Curious fool, be still!

Is human hate the growth of human will?'

*Excuse the rudeness of my quotation."*

"Impossible!" returned Andrée, laughing. "Do you know the clouds are breaking, Maud? If it clears presently, I shall put on my waterproof and take Lilly with me to see Mrs. Shaw and the children."

This was the wife of a naval officer, whose little people had made friends with Lilly on the beach, which led to an acquaintance between the elders of the families. The children being nice, healthy, well-behaved young creatures, both Andrée and Maud thought their company would do Lilly good.

"Will you come?"

"No, thank you, Andrée; I want to finish my piece of work to-night; to-morrow may be the beginning of a new spell of fine weather, then I shall want to live out of doors again."

In about an hour the weather did improve, and Andrée set out with Lilly for their promised visit.

Maud kept diligently at her work, occasionally breaking into snatches of song, and thinking over her own wonderful good fortune in having so good a friend as Andrée, until she had accomplished her task; and, having put her work-basket in order, she was about to leave the room, when the door was flung open and "Mr. Landon" announced.

"Excuse my intrusion," said that gentleman blandly. "When I heard Miss Nugent was out I thought that you, perhaps, would permit me to come in and wait for her return."

"Oh, yes, certainly; Andrée will not be late. Pray sit down. Would you not like some tea?" returned Maud, with careless ease, fancying she perceived a tinge of condescension in the visitor's manner.

"Andrée," he repeated to himself; "considering she *is the creature of her bounty* she might say Miss Nugent."

"Tea," he said aloud; "it is an excellent idea. Yes, I should like it very much indeed. I came to ask hospitality from my cousin, as I have escaped from town for a few days."

"She will be very pleased to see you," returned Maud, in a patronizing tone that infuriated Richard.

"You are too good," he retorted, as she rang the bell, ordered tea, and informed the servant that Mr. Landon would dine there.

"I know Andrée was expecting your brother," resumed Maud, enjoying the look of cold displeasure which gathered in his eyes; "but, unfortunately, in his letter to-day he says he cannot come this next week, not till the week after. It will be very nice for him to meet her friend Mr. Thurston. But he will probably be here then, for he talks of staying a month or two; only Andrée wished to make them known to each other, so she wrote to ask him down."

"Oh, indeed! Thank you," accepting a cup of tea from her hands. "I was not aware that Mr. Thurston had returned."

"He is a very old friend of hers, and I don't wonder at her being so fond of him, he is so amusing and interesting, and, I think, so handsome! Shall I give you some more sugar?"

"Thanks, no. A man may well be flattered by such an eulogium from the lips of a young lady. Young ladies are seldom so—may I say—outspoken."

"Very likely!" with a sweet smile, and her head a little on one side. "You see I am very frank, quite an *ingénue*."

"So it seems. And Mr. Thurston is going to make some stay here?"

"Yes. He is going to bring out a book of 'Letters

from the Seat of War,' or some such title; as he wants to be near his little girl, and Andrée wishes it, he is going to do all revising and correcting down here."

"Ah, I understand; and thus bestow the light of his countenance upon his worshippers, including yourself!"

"Exactly," said Maud, and laughed a peal of merry musical laughter, which was far from pleasing to the ear of Richard Landon. A more insolent, ill-bred, objectionable young woman he had never met, though undeniably handsome. If he succeeded, as he now expected, Andrée should see very little of this *protégée* of hers; and, as he thought it, Andrée came into the room, followed by Lilly, both looking rosy after their quick, damp walk.

"Richard!" exclaimed Andrée, with her grave, sweet smile. "This is very good of you; I did not expect you so soon again."

"Thank you," he returned, as he rose to shake hands with her. "It is nearly a month since I was here last."

Her welcome gratified him; he stood well with her after all; and Lady Sarah was right—though no beauty, there was something about her that made her a desirable helpmate.

Andrée sat down to talk with her cousin and hear his news. "So," she said presently, "Mrs. Kellett tells me your sister's marriage is fixed for the 15th?"

"Mrs. Kellett!" repeated Richard with a quick frown. "Does Mrs. Kellett write to you! I should have thought my mother——"

"Oh, Mrs. Landon will write to me, and tell me about the bridesmaid's dresses, and everything, but she is so busy." Richard was silent for a minute or two, and then resumed:

"And you have refused Lady Sarah again? She says she will never have any more to do with you. According

to Miss Analy—isn't that her name?—Mr. Thurston is too charming a companion to be exchanged for the most delightful circle in the world."

"He is very agreeable—perhaps interesting is a better word, and to me has the additional attraction of old acquaintance."

"Which appears to be quite unnecessary; according to your young friend's view he seems fascinating enough (at least in her eyes) without it."

Andrée smiled. "I hope Mr. Thurston will return while you are here, Richard, and you can then judge for yourself. He is not what is termed fascinating in appearance, but he is very good;" and she turned to other subjects too decidedly to permit Richard's reverting to Thurston, while she thought, "Maud must have been exaggerating in some way, or speaking unguardedly; she does talk too fast sometimes; I must warn her."

For the remainder of the evening, however, there was no fault to find with the discretion of Miss Analy. She said very little, and that little was polite and insignificant. Richard Landon was conciliatory all round, and bestowed much attention on Lilly, who showed him her favourite picture-books, and explained the illustrations after her own fashion. Richard asked Andrée to play for him, and observed how greatly he preferred instrumental to vocal music, on which an argument arose, in which Maud carefully avoided taking a part.

He left them early, promising to present himself next day before luncheon, after which, if the weather permitted, they would drive to the picturesque remains of Porchester Castle.

As soon as he was gone Maud put away her work, and then gave a huge undisguised yawn.

"Are you very sleepy, Maud?" asked Andrée, amused.

"Yes, and bored. It is so tiresome to listen for a whole evening to a man who is working hard to be amiable and agreeable, when he would much prefer cutting the conversation short with a good big 'damn,' and retiring to smoke and sulk."

"I don't think you like Richard Landon."

"It does not take a witch to find that out!"

"And therefore you are not just to him," said Andrée.

"I am sure I don't know whether I am or not; but, if I don't like him, he hates me."

"Nonsense, Maud! why should he dislike you?"

"Oh, I don't know! Why should I dislike him? still, I do; but I really believe I have a reason. I see that he despises me because I am a penniless dependent."

"That is a mere morbid fancy."

Maud shook her head. "Say rather an unerring instinct. He has the sort of stinging natural enmity to me that curs and servants feel to beggars. It is not much matter, only if—but there! I generally say too much."

"I am afraid you do, Maud; and I fancy you were too lavish in your praises of Mr. Thurston to-day. Do be prudent, dear Maud."

"Why should I be prudent about praising a good, true-hearted man like Mr. Thurston, to please a selfish, crafty, cantankerous fine gentleman like Mr. Landon?"

"Ah, Maud!" exclaimed Andrée, laughing, "was it not much more to annoy Richard than to do justice to John?"

"Andrée, I don't like you when you are so horribly sensible!"

"Forgive me, and promise to keep the peace."

"I would do more than *that* for you, dear! Will you promise me never to marry Richard Landon?"

"I have no intention of that description, I assure

on; nor, I am sure, has he. I daresay he would like my money, most men would; but I believe he is friendly, though he knows he must do without it."

"He is more!" exclaimed Maud, with sudden gravity. He is more than a friend. If the man has a heart, I believe it is in your keeping."

"My dear Maud," cried Andrée, opening her deep, quiet eyes, "the idea is preposterous!"

"Then I shall say no more. Where—where is the book I was reading—'John Inglesant,'—oh, here. No, Andrée, I do not read by candle-light, only if I wake too early in the morning. Good-night and sweet repose."

The morning was bright and fresh, and seemed to have produced a good effect on Richard Landon; his countenance was less guarded, his talk more spontaneous. At luncheon Maud almost retrieved herself in his eyes by conversing:

"I think Lilly would rather go and play with her little friends than take the long drive to Porchester Castle—suppose you treat them all to donkeys? I will go with them, for I have seen the Castle, and would rather take care of Lilly myself."

While she spoke the thought flashed across Richard, "Could Andrée have given her a hint?" but he dismissed it at once. He felt instinctively that if she wished such an arrangement she would have said so unhesitatingly, and, confident as he was in his own attractions, he did not flatter himself that his cousin entertained any feeling towards him beyond the calmest friendly liking.

Matters, therefore, were settled much to his satisfaction, and he deeply enjoyed his drive, the subsequent ramble about the ruins, a long disquisition on various subjects as they sat on the battlements watching the rising tide converting the land-locked harbour into a great



placid lake; and the return journey, the sunset glories transforming land and sea into fairyland.

He had never felt the charm of sympathetic silence before, and for a little while he forgot the dusty highway of the world, the strain and the rush to win a foremost place in the struggling crowd, pushing onward regardless of those who fall fainting in the unequal strife, to be trampled under the cruel feet of the stranger.

It was late when they reached home, and as she opened the door Andrée was surprised to hear a man's voice. Entering, she found Thurston engaged teaching draughts to his little daughter, while Maud looked on.

"You will think me very unceremonious," he said, shaking hands with her. "In fact, I thought it was as well to come straight here and report myself instead of writing, for I was desperately busy."

Andrée assured him that she thought him quite right.

"I arrived by an early train this morning, bag and baggage. I hope to stay here for a couple of months, and have brought my books, etc. Then I started to find a *pied-à-terre* before I came to you; I found one quite near in Devonshire Terrace, and have settled down with the celerity of an old campaigner. Now I am going to work hard every day till four or half-past, after which I shall bestow my tediousness upon you, only Lilly shall pay her dad a visit of ten minutes every morning after breakfast."

"Yes, dear father; and I may stay a little longer sometimes," cried Lilly.

"I am very glad you are to be stationary for a while," said Andrée. "I am also glad you will meet my cousin, Richard Landon; he came down rather unexpectedly yesterday."

"So Miss Analy tells me," he returned; and Andrée

fancied that his tone did not convey the idea of pleasure in knowing the fact.

"We have been to Porchester Castle," she returned. "I have just dropped him at his hotel. I do not think Richard could dine in the same coat he wore all day!"

"Ah, a few weeks of war correspondence would soon change all that!"

Andrée left the room to change her own garments, a delightful sense of exhilaration vibrating through her whole nervous system—life seemed so full, so satisfying. Why did people talk of its disappointments, of its unsatisfactory pleasures! for the moment it seemed to Andrée an elysium of tranquil bliss. She had her old friend's dear child under her care, and *he* was happy enough in the child's and her own company to leave the great fascinating city and spend his time with her and Lilly. Ah! she should yet be able to pay some of her debt to him!

Soon after her return to the drawing-room Richard joined them, very accurately decked in evening dress. He seemed somewhat surprised on finding Thurston in possession of the ground, but he quickly recovered his usual composure, and accosted John Thurston with marked courtesy,—in fact, appeared quite pleased to have an opportunity of making his acquaintance.

Though decidedly cool at first, this flattering attention from a well-bred, well-informed man, soon thawed Thurston's frank, unsuspecting nature, and at the little dinner which ensued the talk was lively and genial. Politics, the war, the effect of our occupation of Egypt, art, literature, all were lightly discussed.

Andrée chiefly listened, but Maud allowed herself to be drawn into the conversation by Thurston, with whom she was a favourite, and who was amused to draw her out and incite her to sharp, bright speeches.

Then came music. Thurston asked for his favourite airs and songs, while Andrée played the accompaniments of the latter, and all were surprised when it was half-past ten.

Finally the two men bid them good-night, and walked off together to their respective quarters.

The following day was fine, fine enough to tempt Thurston into taking a holiday. "Just one," he said, "before settling to earnest work," and they spent it in an excursion to Carisbrooke Castle.

Lilly was left behind with the friendly Evans, as her father feared it would be too long a day for her. But he backed up Andrée in insisting that Maud should be of the party.

It was a beautiful day, and the *partie carrée* enjoyed themselves. They naturally fell into pairs, Maud falling generally to Thurston's care, and Richard keeping by Andrée's side—a little too closely, she thought. She would have liked a little more of Thurston's company.

She was pleased and surprised (why surprised, she could not tell) to see that Richard Landon took so heartily to Thurston. She rather expected they would dislike each other. Indeed, she was a little vexed that her old friend met his advances so coldly. His manners were certainly less refined than Richard's, who must have been in a very good temper, for he was particularly nice to Maud, towards whom his tone had been more contemptuous than conciliatory.

But that young lady was not conciliated.

"We have had a charming day," said Andrée, as she and Maud went to change their dresses before dinner.

"Yes, quite charming, but *I* had the best of it, Andrée!"

"Perhaps so. But I never knew Richard so amiable and agreeable."

"No, nor I! It was remarkable. How I wish there was an instrument like the thing great doctors use to see the brain through the eye, to show us what it hides under sweet smiles and sudden civility—eh, Andrée?"

"I should tremble to use it!—even on you, Maud!"

"I daresay you might find a heap of folly and weakness, but no disloyalty, dear!"

"I don't think I should," said Andrée, with a kindly smile, as she turned into her own room.

That evening Richard himself pressed Maud to sing, and applauded her song, talking very sensibly of her voice, its qualities and capabilities, and strongly recommending more advanced studies to develop it.

He spent some time endeavouring to persuade Thurston to return with him the day but one after, in time to be present at one of Lady Sarah Temple's Thursdays. That lady, he asserted, was longing to make his acquaintance. But Thurston was not to be tempted.

The next afternoon the gentlemen went together to examine a big turret ship, whose first lieutenant was an acquaintance of Thurston's, on which occasion he and Landou dined together.

"He is better than I expected," said Thurston to Andrée as they sat together in the veranda waiting for Richard, who had gone over to the hotel, and was to return for a cup of tea and to say good-bye, as he was to go up to town by the six o'clock express.

"Did you not think you should not like him?" she asked.

"No, certainly not; but he is a shrewd fellow, and deuced civil."

"I began with a curious feeling of distrust to-

wards Richard, but that has worn off; I think I was unjust."

Thurston was silent, for he thought "He is getting round her rapidly. He may be a good fellow, but I don't like it." So little did he like it, that he strolled out into the garden to inspect Lilly's little plot. Richard therefore found his cousin alone when he came in; and, taking a comfortable seat, was silent for a moment, looking away over the sea.

"Do you know," he began suddenly, "I find myself quite reluctant to go back to London—my beloved London—I, who hate small seaside places. You make it too attractive, my dear cousin."

"Thank you!" said Andrée, without lifting her eyes from a piece of knitting which occupied her fingers.

Richard watched her as he resumed:

"Your friend Thurston is a great addition to your (may I say our?) party. He is exceedingly interesting; a man, I should say, who will make his mark. I am going to send him my pamphlet, I think a good deal of his opinion."

"He is very capable," said Andrée.

"There is no doubt of that. You will write to me sometimes, will you not, Andrée? You have plenty of time."

"I may have plenty of time, but I have very little to tell."

"Any little details will interest me, if—if *you* write them! Tell me—oh, tell me how often you go boating by moonlight; how much money they screw out of you for the local charities; above all, tell me how Thurston's affair progresses."

"What affair?" asked Andrée, a little puzzled.

"Why, his suit to Miss Analy. You don't mean

to say you have not observed how things are drifting?"

"Well, no, I cannot say I did; but now you have spoken I think I perceive that——" she said thoughtfully, and paused. Then Maud and tea came in together; Thurston was called in from the garden, and there was much general talk while they imbibed the cheering cup. Then came leave-taking. Thurston offered to go with Landon to the station, and Andrée was left alone with Maud.

## CHAPTER XV.

### SHADOWS.

MISS LANDON'S wedding was conducted on the same lines as all their domestic arrangements—it was handsome, complete, and strictly regulated by precedent; but it was in no way picturesque or original.

Andrée went to town a few days before the ceremony, and remained a few days after it. She was a bridesmaid, and obliged to wear a pink and white costume, like the others. It did not become her one bit, which, to her surprise and self-contempt, irritated her a good deal.

"I shall never wear it again," she thought, as she surveyed herself in the glass; "and it is too bad, to pay so much for what is of so little use! I require most careful dressing if I am to escape absolute ugliness! If I were like Maud, it would be different!" and she sighed heavily. "Perhaps Maud would not mind accepting it, though I have worn it once; then I should not regret having to pay for it," and in her mind's eye she saw Maud looking quite charming in the wedding garment.

The whole function seemed prosaic and uninteresting to Andrée, except that the pained expression of the mother's face, the wistful look in her eyes, touched her heart and determined her to stay a little longer. Mrs. Kellett, of course, was among the guests, in gorgeous array, and made a point of showing off her intimacy with

he heiress; for in Chichester Gardens and its neighbourhood Andrée was credited with untold wealth.

"Do you never intend to come among us again, Miss Jugent?" she exclaimed, squeezing herself almost into Andrée's pocket. "What is the attraction to a second-rate little place like Southsea?"

"It suits us very well in many ways, Mrs. Kellett. The air is excellent; but I do not intend to stay there very long."

"No, indeed, I should think not! I suppose Dick Landon runs down every week to see you?"

"Not nearly so often," returned Andrée, smiling; but he does occasionally, and cheers us up."

"I am told you have a wonderful man, a friend of ours, a war correspondent, and I know not what, staying down there?"

"I suppose you mean Mr. Thurston. Yes, it's very nice to have him for a neighbour, as, I daresay, Mr. Landon has told you. They rather took a fancy to each other."

"Oh, yes; Dick tells me most things. He is very wide-awake, I can tell you, but I can see through him."

"Of course you can, if he tells you everything," said Andrée good-humouredly.

"I see you are sharp enough yourself," returned Mrs. Kellett. "I am thinking of coming down to Southsea myself, with the children, in August. Your being there is a great attraction."

Andrée thanked her, and silently prayed that she might be delivered from such an infliction.

"That is a very handsome wedding present of yours," he recommenced; "really, weddings are a terrible tax nowadays. Oh dear! the bride is coming down; she has



such an ugly going-away dress; and did you ever see such a sheepish, awkward young fellow as Lorrimer! Mr. Kellett was bad enough, but nothing to——Oh, come into the hall, or we shall find no place.”

There was a break in the conversation till the bride had been shaken hands with, kissed, pelted with rice, and finally driven off in a shower of old slippers; then it struck Andrée as curious that Mrs. Kellett still stuck to her, still questioned her about Thurston and “Dick”; finally she asked, “And how does the little governess get on?”

“Do you mean my friend, Miss Analy? Why, she is twice your height, Mrs. Kellett! We get on remarkably well; and Mr. Thurston is greatly pleased with the progress his little girl has made under her care.”

“Ah, yes, indeed, I dare say he is,” this with much significance.

“Is it possible that Richard talks to this very common little woman about everything concerning my affairs?” thought Andrée, angrily, and Richard Landon coming up at the moment, she received him more coldly than she was aware. He was dismayed, and attached himself to her for the rest of the afternoon, which, at all events, kept Mrs. Kellett at bay.

At last all was over, the last guest departed, and Mrs. Landon, complaining of a bad headache, retired to her room. Here she permitted Andrée to accompany her, to help her into a cool dressing-gown, to bathe her brow in eau de Cologne and water, and soothe her with quiet kindly words, till she fell asleep.

Downstairs the father and his two sons partook of a mingled dinner-supper kind of meal.

Charlie, who had been the life of the party, though tired, was in excellent spirits, but they were a rather

silent trio ; both the young men were disappointed by the disappearance of Andrée.

"How long does Miss Nugent remain in town?" asked Richard, who was always formal with his father.

"She does not leave till Saturday," cried Charlie, "and I have promised to escort her and stay a couple of days."

"Is business so dull that you can be spared from the office?" asked Richard, with a snarl in his voice.

"Oh, yes! My father is too anxious about my health not to spare me," this in a mocking tone, "especially as Andrée is bent on having my company."

Richard did not trust himself to reply.

Charlie rose, took out his cigar case, and said, "I am going over to the Kelletts. Mrs. K. has a little impromptu dance on. Shall we see you, Richard?"

"Certainly not."

"Then good-night."

"It is drawing near the end of Andrée's minority," said Richard, when he was gone; "you ought to urge her to choose a solicitor. It would not be pleasant for you to ask your right hand to ascertain what your left had been doing."

"You may be very sure she will not leave her affairs in my hands," said Mr. Landon. "I doubt if even she will accept a legal adviser on my recommendation, but I will take the opportunity of her being here to talk to her. I must say I do not wish to have anything to do with her money; and I hope, my dear Richard, that if you do marry the young lady, you will look sharply after your own interests."

"If I make up my mind to such a step I shall take care of them; but you must remember, sir, that Andrée Nugent's sole advantage is money, and, for a man with

ambition such as mine, social standing is almost as important as money; still, I might do worse."

"Considerably worse," returned Mr. Landon drily. "However, as you long ago took the direction of your life into your own hands, no advice can be of much value to you. It seems to me that to manage Andrée Nugent as a wife would be no easy task; a more self-willed young woman I have never met."

In truth Mr. Landon had developed a very strong dislike to his niece. Her strong individuality had been an offence to him from the first. Where he had expected a morsel of malleable wax he found a nugget of quartz, small matter to him that it was permeated with gold. All his cold dignity, his stern rule, went for nothing with this plain, insignificant girl, whom he had to pick out of the gutter of poverty in order to hand over the fortune, on which he had counted, to her.

Richard made no direct answer, but changed the subject as soon as he could. He had no intention of taking his father into his confidence, especially as he was growing anxious, even eager, to win Andrée's consent; yet afraid to hasten his action, fearing another repulse. Besides, he preferred to wait until she was of age; no meddling advisers could then interfere with the settlement of her money. Another complication had arisen, too, out of the failure of one or two speculations, which had crippled him considerably, and made a wealthy marriage of much more importance to him than it had been a few months ago. He therefore determined to accept an invitation from Lady Sarah Temple to her country house, and take counsel with her astute ladyship, especially as on one or two occasions she had given more than advice to help him through a narrow pass; though it was hardly wise to leave *Andrée* to the unchecked influence of *Thurston*—beside

him, the danger of Charlie's pretensions faded into insignificance. Ultimately he decided to pay the proposed visit to Lady Sarah, and leave the rest to providence.

He therefore bade Andrée a carefully guarded though affectionate farewell, begging to be kept informed respecting her daily life, also of the loves of Thurston and Miss Analy, in which he seemed to take a deep interest; and Andrée promised him with smiling eyes.

The remainder of her stay in town was very fully occupied. She had asked Mrs. Landon with kindly warmth to return with her to Southsea, for she was touched by the sadness of her look; but that lady had promised to visit her sister, the wife of a country rector. Moreover, Mr. Landon was to accompany her on Saturday and remain till Monday; nothing, therefore, could possibly alter *that* arrangement.

Mrs. Landon being very fully occupied with her preparations for leaving home, Andrée went about her shopping and business alone.

Her business consisted in a long private and confidential interview with Mr. Damer, the result of which did not transpire for a good many months; but, as that gentleman escorted her to the carriage which waited, he was overheard to say: "You are a truly generous woman; but remember, as your legal adviser, I have warned you against this liberality; yet I do not think you will have cause to repent it."

As Mr. and Mrs. Landon wished to start early on Saturday morning, Andrée took a late train the evening before, and, accompanied by Charlie, who was in towering spirits, reached Southsea without let or hindrance.

Maud only awaited the travellers, and hailed them with joy.

"It has been miserable without you, Andrée!" she ex-

claimed. "Mr. Thurston has been hard at work till after luncheon every day; then, of course, he often likes to walk alone with Lilly. He went out for a moonlight stroll some little time ago, but will just look in before he goes home."

"By Jove, it is exquisite, the sea and the moon, to say nothing of the stars indoors," cried Charlie. "Why, Miss Analy, you are quite sunburnt! the great luminary has been taking liberties with you!"

"You are very uncivil, Mr. Landon, and unkind too, to remind me of what I see and feel only too keenly. Now what would you like to take before you retire to rest?"

"Tea for me, and some supper for Charlie," said Andrée.

"No, thanks. Tea for me too, it is not three hours since we dined."

Maud rang to order it, and the servant entering in answer to the summons ushered in Thurston.

"Welcome back, Andrée!" he said, shaking hands with her. "We have missed you more than enough; Lilly most of all.—Mr. Landon, happy to make your acquaintance," and they exchanged greetings, and then fell into talk over the tea-table.

"You look as if you had been a month in that forcing-house, London," said Thurston to Andrée, as Maud and Charlie fell into an argument on French and German music.

"I had rather a busy week. I tried to do and to buy everything I wanted, so as to stay here quietly until after my birthday; and the weather was oppressive."

"Hum! you look white and worn!" returned Thurston, looking earnestly at her. "Wasn't the wedding exhilarating?"

"Not to me. The principal parties were commonplace, so was the ceremony." She paused, and added: "I had a long interview with Mr. Damer. I like him even better as an adviser than as a member of society. I rather think he will be a comfort to me. I told my uncle, too, that he was to be my man of business; whether it pleased or displeased him I cannot say; he is rather an impenetrable person."

"I am sure you will find Damer a clear-headed man and a good fellow. I see you are tired. I'll take young Landon off. He is not like the other; never saw two brothers so unlike. I prefer this man's face. Is the eldest coming down too?"

"No, he is going to stay with Lady Sarah Temple."

"She makes rather a pet cat of him, doesn't he?"

"That is an ill-natured way of putting it, John, and it is not natural to you to be ill-natured."

"Thanks for your good opinion. Ill-nature is easily acquired in the cruel competition of the world. Good-night, Andrée, sleep well! Come, Mr. Landon, before you and Miss Anally come to blows. I will show you your way to the hotel."

"Many thanks, I am ready."

"You must tell me all about the wedding to-morrow, Andrée. You shall go to bed at once, you look so tired. I never saw you look so lifeless. Do stay in bed to-morrow morning, I will bring you your breakfast," and Maud kissed her friend tenderly. "Shall I brush your hair? Oh, yes, I know Evans is there, but she never soothed you with her brushing as I used in the old days when we helped each other."

"No, indeed, dear Maud; but I shall not accept even

Evans's help to-night. I can manage for myself, and want to get to bed as fast as possible."

In truth Andrée was thirsting for solitude and liberty to think; she had been puzzled and distressed with herself for some time. A strange dull aching, almost physically painful, had broken up the delicious content which had almost, ever since her recovery, soothed her heart. She had never dreamed that life could become so sweet, so satisfying, as hers had grown.

It was some little while before she could trace this depression to its source, or rather before she would allow herself to acknowledge its true source; for the truth lay ready to be seen if she would but open her eyes. How often we lie to ourselves in turning away from truths that humiliate! But this state of self-deception did not last long with so healthy a nature as Andrée's. She soon allowed herself to perceive that this heart-ache began when Richard Landon asked her to let him know how Thurston's suit to Maud progressed.

Could she doubt the acumen of a keen observer, an experienced man of the world like Richard? No; nor could anything be more natural and probable than a lonely man like John Thurston should be drawn to a bright creature such as Maud Anely—bright and sweet—whose loving care of his darling had awakened his warm gratitude. Then she was a fair, almost a beautiful woman. Oh, blessed gift of beauty! where is the woman who does not crave for it more than for treasures of gold and silver—yea, than for cairns of jewels, or for wide, grasping intellect? To be loved—to charm the eye and win the heart, as goodness does not, neither knowledge nor yet strength—this is the aspiration, the desire of all female hearts; nor can they be blamed—

"A thing of beauty is a joy for ever,"

whether it be on canvas or in marble, in the strain of music which thrills the veins or in the softness of human flesh.

And Andrée loved beauty, and had always quietly regretted that the glorious gift had been denied her; but now she would have given all she possessed for it, as it seemed to her for the moment that such a price would not be too high. Why did she long for it so intensely? The answer came quick and clear. Because the crown of life to her would be to bring sunshine and peace and a wife's love into the rest of John Thurston's days here on earth.

She shrunk from the boldness of her own wishes. Why is it so disgraceful for a woman to give her love unasked? It need not be so, if she has the strength and self-respect to hide the feelings which have sprung up unsought. And she might remain a kind and useful friend; but deep in her heart she felt it would be giving bread for a stone. Before Richard had spoken she never dreamed of more than a close and tender friendship. It did not cross her mind that Thurston would care to marry anyone.

Meditating and battling with herself, striving to win back her own self-esteem, Andrée came to see that the seed of her present profound affection was sown long ago, in the old days of poverty and difficulty, when her beloved friend, Lilly, appeared to her almost deified by the love of so noble and true a man as Thurston. To the memory of those sweet chequered times she had always looked with inexpressible tenderness, and enlightened by a chance, or what seemed to her a chance, word she perceived what it was that lent the present its inexpressible charm.

After all, Richard Landon was perhaps mistaken.



Still, though Thurston might not be Maud's lover, it did not follow that he would ever be Andrée's. Oh no! she did not expect that. He loved beauty and grace. The dear dead Lilly had both. It was not likely that John Thurston would ever give her (Andrée) a lover's thought but she might have his respect and regard as a valued friend. This it would be the effort of her life to win. He only would not marry. She had but to look into her own heart to see how absolutely unimportant the best friend must become to him, if he ever loved anyone enough to make her his wife. Still, though not certain nothing was more probable than his drifting, as Richard Landon phrased it, into an attachment to Maud, and Maud would be a delightful companion to her husband and a tender, loving mother to little Lilly. How base and low it was of her (Andrée) not to rejoice that her dear and valued friend should have this happiness, this consolation after the sorrows and troubles of his life. She must conquer such unworthiness, and stamp it out. Suddenly it occurred to her that possibly Maud might not give love for love. She was not a girl with romantic fancies, nor in the least inclined to idealize any man, and if Thurston had attached himself to her Andrée prayed he might not be disappointed. But, after all, that was not likely to happen; at least it seemed to Andrée that most women would respond if he sought their love.

For herself, she must be brave,—not to conquer the affection which had taken possession of her, but to hide it, to keep it free from the taint of jealousy, to be true and just, and to fill her life with useful work. Ay! but where should she find it? If she sought diligently she must find her niche at last.

It was broad daylight before merciful sleep came to her, not to refresh, for broken, uncomfortable dream

harassed her still; and she rose more weary than when she lay down.

It is marvellous how, once the mind has received a strong impression, every trifle is accepted as "proof as strong as holy writ" of that which we have predetermined exists. About Maud Andrée was not so sure, but of Thurston's state of mind she soon had no shadow of doubt.

Maud was a frank coquette, and amused herself by teasing Charlie Landon to the best of her ability, and Thurston grew moodier and more silent during his stay.

To leave Thurston free that he might share Maud's time and attention, instead of being obliged in courtesy to bestow his company on his young hostess, Andrée frequently went out with Lilly in the morning when she knew that he never left his work, and stayed indoors in the afternoon on one plea or another. She was quieter and more silent than before her visit to London, but none the less kind and thoughtful for those about her. So the days fled away, and she waited patiently, bravely, for Thurston and Maud to come to that understanding, that engagement which she began to think inevitable.

While he stayed Charlie Landon kept them alive, and Andrée felt sincerely for him as she observed how much it cost him to tear himself away. She must really speak to Maud when some opportunity offered. None did for several days, till one evening, sitting on the beach while Lilly sought for pretty pebbles, and listening to the band discoursing sweet music on the pier, she took a letter received that afternoon and looked through it.

"Charlie Landon says he wants to come down here again," she said.

"I am sure I hope he will," cried Maud, "he is so bright and amusing. We have been quite dull and blue-

devilish lately. I am afraid Mr. Thurston is not getting on well with his book; he looks so glum, and he is not half so pleasant as he used to be!"

"Well, Maud, if Charlie does come (forgive me, dear!), I hope you will not tease him and play any cruel game with him. It is not right. I think, I fear, he is very fond of you."

Maud looked at her friend with an expression of blank surprise, then she laughed. "Why should I not tease him, Andrée? Don't you think he is right well able to take care of himself? All men are! You need not be afraid of his breaking his heart! He likes me. Yes, I dare say. And he is not a bad fellow, but if you imagine he would make the slightest sacrifice for me, you are uncommonly mistaken. His is just a surface liking. I amuse him, perhaps pique him; any way, I stir up his slow *bourgeois* blood. If he smarts a little, that cannot be helped."

"I think his blood is quick enough, Maud," returned Andrée, surprised by her tone. "Why do you speak so harshly?"

"I do not speak harshly; but I get out of patience with men, they think so much of themselves, they are such self-seekers. Mr. Landon likes to be amused; well, he shall be; if he has to pay for his amusement—well, he must."

"You are unreasonable, Maud! A great number of men and women are self-seekers, but not all—by no means all."

"Perhaps if I had a fortune like you I should take a more favourable view of my fellow-creatures!"

"Still, Maud, in our worst times we found friends. My aunt, in her own hard way, was generous to me; and *you made me love you; then Mr. Thurston——*"

"Ah!" cried Maud, with enthusiasm, "it is not fair to pick out two such specimens. You are the truest and most generous of women; and Mr. Thurston, where do you find anyone like him? He is man enough to share poverty with the woman he loved, rather than let her struggle alone." She stopped abruptly.

"Can he have asked her to be his wife?" thought Andrée, startled. "No; neither would have kept such a matter from me." And she added aloud, "You are right, there are not many like him."

"Well, don't talk to me any more about Mr. Charlie Landon; he is a very trifling consideration!"

"I shall not offend again," returned Andrée, smiling; "but I must continue to like Charlie, for I am sure he is quite worth liking."

Maud tossed her head, and, rising from the camp-stool on which she was sitting, went away to help Lilly in her search for curious pebbles.

Andrée sat still and pondered over Maud's outburst till she arrived at a solution of the mystery. Thurston was probably vexed and jealous of Maud's flirtation with Charlie—this accounted for his moodiness—and Maud very unreasonably blamed Charlie for what was really her own fault. It was plain enough, but she (Andrée) had better not meddle in what did not concern her.

It had gradually become known, that although they lived so unpretendingly, that one of the two ladies at "The Laurels" was an heiress, and most people, especially the men, concluded that the handsome, elegant-looking girl was endowed both by fortune and nature—the plain one must be the humble companion. By degrees a few of the more distinguished ladies called upon them, which rather worried Andrée, but amused Maud; and those of their new acquaintances who had children often invited

Lilly to tea. Maud frequently accompanied her, and so people began to find out which was which. Both Lilly's loving protectresses were thankful to give her young companions, and the little creature was growing fond of play, and not averse to a romp.

"Where are Lilly and Miss Analy?" asked Thurston one afternoon, finding Andrée alone with a grave book in the drawing-room.

They have gone to Mrs. Woodford's to tea. There is a nice large shady garden there, where they can play. I think there is a juvenile garden-party, so Maud went to give Lilly some sense of security."

"She is wonderfully good to the child," said Thurston thoughtfully; "I can never forget it."

"It is a labour of love with her," returned Andrée; then neither spoke for a minute.

"It is a long age since you and I had a walk together," recommenced Thurston; "I don't think you go out enough, you are always poring over some solemn book, and you haven't half the brightness and spirit you had when I came down here first. What have you got there?—'Modern Science and Modern Thought.' Very good; but a succession of such solids is enough to create indigestion—mental indigestion. Let us ramble away along the sea wall to Eastney; the sun will be behind us, and there is a delicious breeze blowing up with the tide. I want to consult with you, for you are a wise little woman; not so little, either, only your tall friend dwarfs you when she is near."

"I will come with you gladly," said Andrée, rising to fetch her hat, and calling on her courage and steadfastness not to forsake her, for she felt he was going to talk of Maud.

*The breeze was, as he said, delicious and life-giving,*

and Andrée felt stronger and firmer as she inhaled it. After walking some way in silence, save for a few commonplaces about the sea and a foreign war-vessel which was anchored off Spithead, Thurston said rather suddenly :

"I have nearly finished my book."

"Indeed ! you have been quicker than you expected."

"Yes, rather ; I have grown impatient over it. I find my old restlessness coming back upon me ; and, once this work is off my hands, I think I'll go to Egypt or some other out-of-the-way place again."

"My dear John, what a change ! A month ago you only cared to stay in England, to make a home for Lilly. Something has annoyed you."

"I am annoyed with myself. I am still too young, in spite of the dark waters which closed over me for a while ; I still see visions and dream dreams, which my reason tells me are folly, and yet which I cannot renounce."

There was sadness and emotion in his voice. Andrée thought, with some indignation, that Maud must have been teasing and vexing him ; it was too bad of her.

"I hope you will do nothing rashly, John !" she said earnestly ; "you might regret it when too late. Wait at least till your book is clear out of your hands. Then, you really must see me of age, and free to do what I like, before you desert us."

"I can be of no use to you, Andrée. You have an excellent adviser in Damer. Those two Landons are ready to do anything, everything for you. I suppose one or other of them will be here pretty constantly. I don't find either very fascinating ; but that is my bad taste."

"He is jealous !" thought Andrée. "They are not stupid," she said aloud, "but not, of course, your equals

in knowledge and experience." Thurston laughed rather a scornful laugh.

"You must yield to me in this matter," she resumed persuasively; "you must stay for my twenty-first birthday. Then, Lilly would feel your departure terribly; she is growing very, very fond of you. Of course, I shall be delighted to take care of her, but——"

"Yes," interrupted Thurston, "I know! If you marry, she would be in the way!"

"I was not going to say so," returned Andrée, smiling; "that is a distant contingency."

"Do you never intend to marry?"

"I have no intentions of any kind in that direction, and I may marry some day; but, John! I wish you would promise to wait at least until October, it is not long."

"Do you really care that I should?"

"You know I should not ask you if I did not! You are the only old friend I have in the world! Do stay, John!"

He was silent for a minute; then he said in a low tone and with a sigh:

"I will stay then." Another brief pause, and he began to speak of some articles in the graver magazines which had pleased or displeased him, and for the rest of their walk he was quite himself; indeed, Andrée thought she had never heard him talk so well.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### OH ! FOR ONE-AND-TWENTY.

JOHN THURSTON stayed ; but he must have had more of his book to finish than he had calculated, for he was often busy over it, even in the afternoon, especially during the few days which Richard Landon spent with them, not long after the conversation above recorded. Then came the correcting of proofs, which also gave him much trouble, and obliged him to go to and fro to town frequently.

This visit of Richard's made Andrée uneasy. She found a change in his manner which was very distasteful to her—a return to something of lover-like airs and graces, which he had carefully avoided for months.

To Maud Analy he had assumed an air of frank friendliness, very different from his former supercilious tone, by which that young lady professed herself greatly edified. In speaking of her to Andrée he alluded jocularly to Thurston's admiration, but feared that Maud roused his jealousy by her gracious and attractive style of receiving the attentions of one or two sailor and soldier officers they had met at the houses of their new acquaintances, and who were generally wandering about the pier when the band played, or strolling in the late evening on the common.

"He is just the man to be desperately jealous," said Richard, as he was walking with Andrée to the beach,



whither Maud and Lilly had preceded them to find their old boatman and enjoy a row in the cool of the evening. "He is evidently out of sorts, and not a bit like himself. He must be pretty far gone."

"Yes, I think so," returned Andrée, who had once or twice felt puzzled respecting John Thurston's mood; but, while Richard spoke, felt absolutely convinced of his devotion to Maud.

"I hope they will soon come to an understanding, and be happy."

Her quiet adoption of his idea misled Richard; though he did not flatter himself that she had any warm feeling for himself, he felt tolerably sure she cared for no one else. Still, he hesitated to try his fate; it would look better, he thought, if he deferred his proposal until she was of age and free to follow her own bent. Somehow he shrank from the repetition of his former fruitless proposal. It was strange that she should be so unmoved by his attentions, for he knew that the feelings she inspired were nearer akin to the better kind of love than anything of which he had ever dreamed himself capable; and Richard, like the majority of men, thought that with women it was only necessary to ask in order to receive.

For the larger half of Landon's visit Thurston was in town, and when he returned Richard was most reluctantly obliged to leave, some business, both unpleasant and important, calling him away.

It was about a week after he left that Charlie appeared in a yachting get-up, which suited him well. It was the long vacation, and he had accepted the invitation of a friend, a wealthy young stockbroker, to take a cruise along the south coast, pausing, of course, at Cowes.

This event introduced a little more movement into the lives of our friends, and for a week they were quite gay;

moreover, Thurston was able to accompany them in their short yachting expeditions in the intervals between the arrival of packets of proofs.

But the owner of the yacht wished to go on to the south of Ireland, to visit Bantry Bay and Glengarraf, and tried to persuade Charlie Landon to accompany him; Charlie, however, seemed inclined to stay where he was.

It was the evening before Mr. Fenton, the hospitable master of the pretty little vessel, was to proceed westward; they had been spending the afternoon sailing up Southampton Water, and were now returning with a light but favourable breeze, which sent the yacht gently through the water. Andrée, with Thurston and their host, were sitting on deck, watching the lights appearing one by one on the shore as the sunset glories faded away, and talking at intervals, while Maud and Landon leant over the bows, gazing at the ripple made by the vessel's progress.

"It is too bad of Landon to desert me!" said Fenton, taking his cigarette from his lips. "Yachting is all very well, but one wants a companion."

"Then he has decided to remain here?" asked Andrée.

"Yes, so he told me this morning. The worst of it is I do not know any one down here I'd care to have with me; a solitude à deux is very trying—worse indeed than the real thing."

"Yes," returned Thurston, as if to himself, "loneliness is bad enough; *I* have had enough of it! But to make a companion companionable, and not an intolerable bore, there must be an instinctive understanding and sympathy between you and him, or her—a sort of thing one can never analyze, yet the absence of which is instantaneously felt, and is destructive of comfort."

"Oh! if that sort of comprehension exists between

you and *her*," said Fenton, "it soon comes to something considerably stronger than friendship."

"Very likely," agreed Thurston; and he grew silent.

"Why don't you come with me, Mr. Thurston?" began Fenton, after a pause. "I believe the scenery is very fine along that part of the Irish coast, and I fancy we'd get on very well together."

"It is a most tempting offer," said Thurston courteously, "and I greatly regret I cannot accept it. I am, however, bound to see these volumes of mine through the press, and shall be obliged to spend some time in London—a ghastly place at this time of year."

"Besides," added Andrée, "you have promised to be with us—with Maud and me—on my birthday, which is not more than a week off. Mr. Thurston really must not go," she added, addressing Fenton.

"No! nor would he if he could, I suspect! Well, I must put up with solitude." Then the two men fell on the topic of solitary imprisonment, which they discussed with interest; while Andrée reflected that some misunderstanding must have sprung up between Maud and Thurston, as he had been speaking now and then of leaving England. The idea of doing so had evidently rested in his mind, and she had been variable in her moods, sometimes wildly gay, sometimes desponding. Andrée was profoundly anxious that no further sorrow should come to crush the revival of hope and brightness in Thurston's heart. Of herself she had ceased to think at all; only in self-forgetfulness could she find peace, while the future seemed to her grey and dreary.

She was roused from her thoughts by a sudden change in the tones of the speakers beside her. Then Fenton called to one of the sailors and asked for Briggs.

"What is the matter?" asked Andrée.

"The breeze is failing us," returned Thurston, "and Mr. Fenton thinks it might be prudent to catch the Southsea steamer, for we may be becalmed here all night."

Here the sailing-master of the yacht joined them, and strongly advised that they should adopt that plan.

The steamer's lights were now seen approaching, and measures were taken to call attention to the nearly becalmed vessel. While speaking, Maud and Charlie joined them; and, after a short and not too pleasant transit in the yacht's boat, and clambering up a slippery ladder, they found themselves on board the steamer and speeding homeward.

On the way, Andrée's fears as to a misunderstanding between Maud and Thurston were much allayed as she noticed that she spoke frequently to him, looking up confidently in his face, and keeping him by her side all the way. Charlie Landon found some acquaintance among the passengers, for he mixed among them, and they saw nothing of him till they landed at Southsea.

So ended a pleasant day—at least, one that seemed to possess all the ingredients of pleasantness; what it really was to the several members of the quintette, they themselves only knew.

Next morning Maud took Lilly out for a ramble on the beach immediately after breakfast, declaring that the child had been shamefully neglected during the last few days; and Andrée settled herself to write to Mr. Damer about some matters he had promised to arrange, when a note was handed to her; no answer was required, the servant said. Andrée, with great surprise, recognized the handwriting as that of Charlie Landon; opening it quickly, she read as follows:

"DEAR ANDRÉE: After all Fenton's kind hospitality I don't think it would be good form to leave him in the lurch; I have therefore made up my mind to accompany him on his Irish cruise. Pray forgive me for not coming to say good-bye in person, but Fenton is anxious to get across to Cowes, where he expects to find the yacht, and hopes to sail about noon. I am going with him. Shall write to you from the 'land of misfortune.' My best regards to all, especially to yourself.

"Ever yours,

"C. LONDON."

Andrée was bewildered by this change of plans. Something must have happened; but what? Something connected with Maud? Yes; that must be the cause of this sudden devotion to Mr. Fenton. Perhaps Maud had shown Charlie that she had no heart to give him; perhaps—she knew not what, only that few men, in her opinion, could have a chance against Thurston.

While she thought, that gentleman came in. "Are you all alone?" he asked.

"Yes; and quite dazed by this note from Charlie Landon," and she handed it to him.

Thurston glanced through it.

"This is very sudden indeed!" he exclaimed. "What has happened? Has the poor young fellow got the sack?"

"What is that?" asked Andrée, "an illness?"

"No," returned Thurston, laughing. "I forgot you have never had a chance of knowing the resources of English slang. It means he has been rejected—his young affections nipped in the bud."

"Do you think so? Then the offender must be Maud Analy."

"No doubt of that." Thurston paused abruptly, a stern look of annoyance clouding his brow. "I am afraid," he said, "that she is rather thoughtless in some directions, though a fine creature. Couldn't *you*, to whom she is so much attached, warn her that she will get into a scrape some day if she plays fast and loose in this way? Where is she?"

"On the beach with Lilly."

"Um! I will go down and meet them. You will speak to Maud, Andrée? A word from you——"

"Yes, I will, John; though I would rather not. I saw nothing very like love-making on either side."

"Didn't you?" returned Thurston. "I don't think you know much about it, Andrée."

His words struck Andrée. First, they suggested that jealousy no doubt sharpened his observation; secondly, that he had not the faintest suspicion of her own feelings towards him. If she could but uproot them how tranquil her life might be! though the subtle sweetness which had of late pervaded it was no doubt gone for ever."

Her reply was a quiet "Perhaps so."

"I came over to say that I am going to town for a day or two this afternoon. I suppose you will be busy next week? You will enjoy being your own mistress, eh, Andrée? with the world before you where to choose."

"There is something desolate, too, in that complete freedom, is there not, John? Yes, I shall enjoy being able to do what I like with my own. Mr. Landon has always given me what I asked for; still, I have had to ask for it."

"There lies the difference," said Thurston. "Now I must look for Lilly and her guardian angel," he was saying, when the door opened to admit both.

"Ah, father!" cried Lilly, running to him and set-

ting herself on his knee. "Have you done all your tiresome lessons? then come out with me. Maud is tired; she hurt her foot on the beach; it was very bad, and made her cry."

"How did you manage it, Maud?" asked Andrée, kindly.

"Not sprained your ankle, I hope," said Thurston, looking earnestly at her.

Maud blushed violently. "Oh, you need not be uneasy; my foot slipped in between two great stones, and—and—I am such a disgraceful coward about pain; you ought not to have betrayed me, Lilly! I am ashamed of my weakness."

"But father is not angry, only sorry," exclaimed the child.

"I must go and take off my boot," said Maud, turning to the door.

"First say good-bye to me," cried Thurston, setting down his little daughter, and coming over to shake hands with her. "I am going up to London with the last set of my proofs; wish me good luck, Maud!"

His voice sounded to Andrée peculiarly tender; his somewhat harsh face softened. "What magic there is in love," she thought.

"Oh, yes; I do wish you all luck—all happiness," said Maud in a low earnest tone. "But you *must* succeed!" Drawing her hand from him she went quickly away.

"She is cut up about something," said he, looking after her. "You have a kind, womanly heart, Andrée, try and find out what it is; she is awfully lonely, poor young thing!"

"Yes, I will do my best to draw out the sting; and *she is generally confidential with me,*" returned Andrée,

thinking it was her loneliness that helped to attract him, by reminding him of his lost wife.

"Come, little woman," said Thurston to Lilly, "come with father, and help him to pack his bag."

Lilly clapped her hands. To visit her father at his odgings and rummage his belongings was one of her great delights.

"Bring her back to luncheon with you; I shall order it earlier or later, as you choose," said Andrée.

"Your usual hour will do perfectly. Come, Lilly. I wonder how it will fare with you and me when we have no kind friend to think about our luncheons!"

"Lilly must learn to be a wise little housekeeper, and make father comfortable."

"Poor child!" said Thurston, with a sigh. "*Au revoir*, Andrée." Without further leave-taking, or offering to take her hand, Thurston and his little girl departed.

Thurston found a good deal to do in London; nevertheless, he ran down to Southsea to dine with Andrée, and drink her health on her birthday. Somewhat to her relief, Richard Landon contented himself with sending her a neatly-expressed letter, full of good wishes, accompanied by a small packet, which contained a gold bracelet of an uncommon and beautiful design. Lilly offered an elaborately worked needle-book, at which, under Maud's directions, she had worked in secret for some time; and Maud herself, whose capable fingers were versed in the cunning of fancy-work, brought a beautiful offering. Nor was Mrs. Landon forgetful of the occasion. In the letter accompanying her offering she told Andrée that she was going abroad for a couple of months with her sister, who was in delicate health, and regretted not being at home to



receive her, as she would probably wish to come up to town for business or shopping.

Thurston only arrived in time for dinner. He found Andrée alone.

"Well, Andrée," he exclaimed, taking her hand in both of his, "may you live to see your ninety-first birthday, and may all the intervening years be happy! Wear this for the sake of a true friend," and he put a pretty, quaint old "posie" ring on her finger.

"Thank you, John," she said, her heart beating fast at the tenderness and sadness of his tone; "I shall keep it, and wear it always." Thurston stood for a moment still holding her hand, with a far-away look in his eyes; then, with a short quick sigh he released it, and drew near the fire, for it was a chill, damp evening.

"Where is Landon?" he asked.

"Not here. He is—I am not sure where. He said in his letter to me that he was obliged to run over to the Continent on some business, so could not be with us."

"I thought he would have contrived that, anyhow," returned Thurston. The entrance of Maud turned the conversation. The three friends spent a quiet, happy evening together, though Andrée fancied she detected something of an effort in Thurston's cheerfulness and ready talk.

The next day he went back to town, and on that following Andrée took wing for the great city, as Mr. Damer wished to see her to explain the position of her property, and give her a little information as to its management, which she was very anxious to receive.

Mrs. Damer also wrote, inviting Andrée kindly and warmly to stay at her house during her visit to London, and Andrée gladly accepted.

The evening before she left, Maud, who had been un-

usually silent all the evening, suddenly broke out with : "Andrée, I have something to tell you! I have wanted to tell you before but I could not, now I feel I must. It would be wrong not to speak. It is a dead secret."

"My dear Maud, you frighten me!"

"Let me go on," cried Maud, dropping her work and clasping her hands, while she directed her gaze steadily into the fire. "Charlie Landon—well, he asked me to marry him—that day on board the yacht."

"I suspected it," said Andrée quietly.

"Did you?" asked Maud, "then you must be a witch."

"And you refused him, Maud. Why?"

"He offended me; and you would not wonder, if you had heard how he talked of keeping an engagement with me in the dark—of the desperate difficulty there would be in bringing 'the governor' round, of scheming to get the matter on our side; so I just told him I could not think of involving him in difficulties with his family—that I never would enter one where I was not willingly received. Then he said I did not care for him, and abused me a little—so I walked away." Maud stopped short, and Andrée listened for something more.

"Why don't you speak?" cried the former impatiently.

"I don't know what to say, Maud. I am afraid you misunderstood Charlie, or caught him up too quickly. He is a good fellow and a gentleman. You must have given him to understand that you would marry him, or he would not have talked of your engagement."

"Oh, I don't know what I said. I only know I was very angry, and it is all at an end now. I would not marry him for the world. I am not the sort of girl to break my heart about any man. I——"

"I suspect you have been exceedingly foolish and inconsiderate, Maud. I am very fond of Charlie, so I am

vexed that you should have distressed him. However, if you do not care about him——”

“No, not a pin,” returned Maud; “nor he for me, or he would have tried to make it up.”

“Perhaps, Maud, you like someone else better?”

“Who in the world could I like better? Not that funny little Mr. Cochrane; or Captain Forman, with his staccato style,” naming two of her admirers.

“No; poor Charlie is far above both.”

“Well, now I have relieved my mind, I shall go to bed. You are not angry with me, Andrée?” throwing her arms round her. “You are the only real friend I ever had—the truest I ever shall have, and if I have vexed *you*—why, I don’t care to live,” and she burst into tears.

“I am not pleased with you, Maud; but I shall never know how the quarrel really arose, so I cannot judge. I love you all the same, Maud. What is the worth of friendship if it cannot stand the strain of a few mistakes and follies.”

“You are an angel, Andrée—a nice, dear, sensible, human kind of angel, which is much better than a creature with wings. Let us say no more about Charlie Landon—not one syllable! I don’t want to hear of him, or see him, or think of him! Good-night, dear. May you be as happy as you deserve to be. I see all sorts of good before you.” A hasty kiss implanted on Andrée’s left eye, and she ran off to the privacy of her own chamber.

Andrée looked after her thoughtfully, and sat very still, evidently in a reverie; then she put away her book, locked the drawer of her writing-table, and followed her friend’s example.

The next morning she started for London; Maud and Lilly accompanied her to the station. The former looked

very pale, but was quite cheerful and agreeable, ready to attend to her friend's directions, and in no way preoccupied.

To Andrée's surprise and joy she found Thurston waiting for her at Waterloo when she stepped out on the platform. "This is very good of you," colouring with pleasure. "How did you know when I should arrive?"

"Miss Analy told me your train, and as I know you have left your maid behind, and that now-a-days we must not go anywhere unattended, I felt it my bounden duty to be on guard."

"Imagine my having attained to such a bad eminence!" said Andrée, smiling, a very sweet, happy smile; "for it is bad to lose even a fringe of freedom I assure you. I intend to assert mine, and go about alone if I choose."

"You will generally do as you choose, I suspect," he returned. "Let us find your luggage. I can only go part of the way with you, as I must return back to the wilds of Fleet Street, to wrestle with the monsters which thereabouts do congregate; but I dine with you to-night, so it is only *au revoir*."

There was something in the atmosphere of the Damers' quiet home which Andrée felt especially agreed with her. There was comfort and even elegance, but everywhere the trace of thoughtful economy—the economy of harmonious order. Mrs. Damer, who was a woman of the world in a good sense, was very sympathetic to Andrée; she was a fluent, though by no means a superabundant speaker, and Andrée enjoyed listening.

The *partie carrée* at dinner was delightful; plans were discussed and theories started. Mr. Damer had been all day at Mr. Landon's office going through the accounts of Andrée's minority; little remained to be done on the morrow, and all, so far, was in perfect order.

"You had better come down with me to-morrow, Miss Nugent," said Mr. Damer; "I dare say you would like to see Mr. Landon. I asked him to dine with us, but he refused."

"Yes; I should like to see and thank him."

"Quite right," said Thurston. "He is an iceberg—but a well-behaved iceberg."

"Quite so," added Mr. Damer. "That son of his, Richard, seems a clever fellow. Have you read his pamphlets, 'Our Food Supply,' and the last, 'The Rights of Minorities'?"

"Yes; I know them well," said Thurston; and his tone struck Andrée as dry and peculiar.

"Clever, eh?" asked Mr. Damer.

"Decidedly; more than I expected from him. How long do you stay in town, Andrée?"

"A few days, while Mr. Damer is so good as to give me some lessons in financial management, and Mrs. Damer helps me to shop."

"Ah, if that be so, let us go to the Savoy to-morrow. It will not be crowded at this season."

"Delightful!" cried Mrs. Damer.

"Charming!" echoed Andrée; and the ladies left the host and Thurston to their cigars and confidential talk.

They soon appeared in the drawing-room; and Thurston sat down by Andrée to talk of Lilly and what was wisest to do for her. Andrée begged to keep her for a year longer.

"We can settle nothing now," said Thurston with a sigh; "let us see what twelve months may bring forth."

The succeeding days were busily employed. Andrée gave her whole attention to master the details submitted to her by Mr. Damer. "You have too large a balance by *half lying* idle at your bankers," he said; "we must look

out for some safe investment for some of it. As yet, your expenses have been very moderate; but when you decide on some plan of life, you will need a larger supply of cash."

"It seems to me I spend a great deal," returned Andrée; "and I have more than I want in every way."

"Time will correct these views," he replied with a smile.

Andrée paid her ex-guardian a visit, and made him a gracious little speech of thanks for the care he had bestowed on her property. It had small effect in softening his icy demeanour. He made a civil reply, and they parted—to see very little of each other in the years to come.

"Why," asked Andrée, as she drove with Damer to her bank to see the manager and write her signature, "why did Mr. Landon not put my money in the bank from which I derive the larger part of my income?"

"I suppose it was more convenient to keep it in his own. I don't think your predecessor, Miss Witham, banked at 'Witham and Wells'; it is a great joint-stock bank, you know, with a large county connection. This one where you will, I presume, keep your account, 'The London and Wessex,' is a very high-class concern indeed."

"Can I sign the paper or deed to-day?" asked Andrée, after a short pause.

"To-morrow, if you don't object," returned Damer. "I have some unavoidable engagements this afternoon, and must send you back alone. To-morrow you shall accomplish the settlement about which you are so anxious. I hope that in the 'coming by-and-by' you will never reproach me with yielding to your wishes. I am prepared for the reproaches both loud and deep of your future husband."

"That is a very nebulous contingency," said Andrée,

interrupting him with a smile; "and to avoid the interference hereafter of any possible 'lord and master,' is one reason why I am anxious that the thing should be completed before authority or—death can interfere with my intentions."

Their business at the bank was soon completed, and Andrée had the satisfaction of writing and signing her first cheque.

"I don't think Miss Nugent ought to leave so large a balance lying idle," said Mr. Damer to the manager; "we must find some nice safe investment presently for her, where she can realize easily."

"It's not a good time to buy stock or shares," he returned; "safe things are going up. Wiser to leave the money with us (we give three per cent. on deposit) till something really good turns up; two or three months will show how matters will go. There is rather an uneasy feeling in the air just now."


After a few civil sentences addressed to the young heiress, Damer and his client withdrew, and she soon found herself rolling north-west.

It was on the whole a happy day, ending with a pleasant evening spent in listening to the sweet strains of Sullivan and laughing at the humours of Grossmith. Long as was the journey, Thurston went back to supper at the Damers', and they drank success to his book, which was to appear the following day. The chances and prospects of his venture were eagerly discussed, and Andrée listened with deepest interest to the comments and opinions of her companions. Both Mr. and Mrs. Damer were readers and thinkers, and the latter possessed in no small degree the critical faculty. She was familiar with Thurston's contributions, both to magazines and newspapers, and prophesied success.

"For me a good deal depends on this attempt," said Thurston; "if it makes a hit I shall try to exchange journalism for literature. I have a craving for a settled home—for a better chance of securing my little girl's future. Yet it will be some years before she can come to be my companion, and I shrink from the interval of isolation. Everything, however, is very indefinite in my own mind; I fear that, in spite of experience and approaching middle age, I am inclined to cry for the moon!"

Midway in this speech Damer's eyes caught Andrée's, and a look of intelligence passed between them, which brought a slight smile to her lips. When Thurston ceased speaking a look of sombre thought darkened his eyes and deepened the lines on his face, but he soon roused himself, and joined in the talk with animation.

The next few days both Mrs. Damer and Andrée gave the mornings to the perusal of Thurston's book, "On the War Path in Egypt," which they pronounced the most thrilling and brilliant work of adventure they had ever read; this and afternoon shopping made time fly, and the moment for starting for her temporary home came all too quickly, it seemed to Andrée.





## CHAPTER XVII.

### BROKEN GLEAMS.

ANDRÉE was sorry to say good-bye to Mrs. Damer, who had been so kind and sympathetic a hostess, but she longed to see Lilly and Maud again. Yes, thank God, she was still profoundly interested in Maud. No small envy had tarnished her regard for her young companion, who was perfectly innocent of any treachery towards her benefactress, and also, as Andrée believed, incapable of it.

Her thoughts naturally turned towards the future, but they did not dwell upon it, for it was dim and misty. If John Thurston married Maud, of course Lilly's home was secured, but she herself would be homeless, and obliged to seek some stranger for a companion, as she could scarcely live alone. If, on the contrary, Maud did not reciprocate his feelings, and they did not join hands for life's journey, why, Maud and Lilly must remain with her, but it would be impossible for Thurston to come in and out as he used in the first happy days of their seaside sojourn. For the present she could make no plan. Things would arrange themselves before long, so she must just wait.

It was very delightful to find Maud awaiting her at the station, her bright face full of unmistakable pleasure at seeing her again.

"You are looking so pale and weary, dear," she exclaimed, "more as if you had lost a fortune than taken possession of one! How did you part with Mr. Lan-

don? Was he cross about your taking affairs out of his hands?"

"No; I think he was glad to get rid of me and mine. We were most amicable. I made him a neat little speech, complimenting him on his management of my affairs; he smiled, and then we parted."

"That is all right, Andrée! I did not bring Lilly, though she wanted to come, but the sunset hour is not good for her to be out of doors. How quickly the days are drawing in!"

"They are, indeed! We must think seriously of our winter plans when I quiet down after the whirl of business I have been in."

"I suppose you saw Mr. Thurston frequently?"

"Yes, I saw him. He was good enough to come two or three times to consult with Mr. Damer about changing some of my money from one security to another. He has now gone to Yorkshire, to have some shooting with Mr. Benson, the rich Jew banker."

"Lilly will be sorry; she has been looking forward to his return so much."

Here they arrived at The Laurels. At the sound of their "chariot" wheels the door flew open. Andrée saw that the hall was already lighted, saw also Lilly, her own maid, the landlord and landlady, collected to receive her. She was touched and gratified by their cordial looks and warm reception. "I shall never be able to live alone," she thought; "I must have some one to care for, and to care for me."

Then came "high tea," for which Andrée had begged, and after, the delightful task of exhibiting the presents which she had brought: for Lilly, books and a lovely doll, with materials for a complete outfit, the making of which would employ some of the hours which at this season

could not be spent out of doors; for Maud some pretty ornaments and comfortable furs.

"You are too good to me, Andrée," cried Maud, with moist eyes. "I ought never to be unhappy when I have so good a friend as you."

"But are you unhappy, dear Maud? Unhappiness seems something quite apart from you!"

"Oh, I am in the doleful dumps sometimes, you know, like everyone else," said Maud, and Andrée noticed there was a little tremble in her voice.

"Now I see you in the full light I don't think you look as bright as you used; you have grown thin too, and—yes, Maud, you have been unhappy. Will you not tell me why?"

"I have missed you dreadfully—and—your eyes *make* me speak, Andrée—I have worried a little—that is, sometimes. Oh, I will tell you all about it some day—but not now, dear!—I will indeed some day, when the spirit moves me!"

"Whenever you like, Maud; I shall be ready to listen."

"Then you will say I am a goose," cried Maud, with a gay laugh, though the tears stood in her eyes. After a minute's silence she began again with a totally new subject. "That Mrs. Kellett who lives near the Landons is down here with two children. She has the large end house with the balcony in Albany Terrace, and has been immensely civil. She is always asking Lilly to tea, to drive, to ride donkeys. The children are nice enough, but she is frightfully curious. She is perpetually trying to find out something about you, about Mr. Thurston, and, above all, about Richard Landon. I don't like her. Her vulgarity is ingrained. She is most anxious for your *return*. She seems to think that you *must* be engaged

to someone; I fancy she rather thinks it is Mr. Landon."

"I wonder why?" said Andrée calmly.

"Heaven knows! perhaps he suggested what he wished of her."

"He might wish to share my money, but I don't think he cares about my heart, Maud. Some time ago I thought he was going to be a nice, sensible friend; but latterly—no! He seems to have possibilities of good companionship in him, but I begin to see that the other side of his nature is the strongest. Oh! I do hope I shall not begin to think that everyone wants my money, and values my money, not myself!"

"That would indeed be the curse of gold," said Maud gravely.

"Has Mrs. Kellett called on you?" asked Andrée, after a short silence.

"No, I don't think she has exactly called; she has come into the house once or twice informally; brought Lilly back after she had been to tea, you know—that sort of thing. Then she looked at the books which lay about, and said she suspected you were a learned lady, and if so, you were wonderfully nice, considering!"

They talked on with the pleasant ease of perfect confidence till it was quite bedtime, and as they parted at Andrée's door Maud said, with careful carelessness, "Did you see Charlie Landon while you were in town?"

"No; he had gone to Scotland, I think; at all events, Mr. Landon was quite alone."

Next day Andrée was pleasantly busy. She had several letters to write, especially to her French aunt, Madame Carrichon, to whom she had always written from time to time, though her letters sometimes remained unanswered. This time she had the pleasure of sending her

a handsome cheque, which she calculated would place the old lady before the world for a good while, and this, too, without any reference to anyone. She felt, as she wrote her name, that freedom and a full purse were excellent things.

After luncheon Maud went out to do some small amount of shopping, and as the weather was showery Andrée stayed with Lilly, who was very pleased to show her improvement in reading to her "auntie," as Thurston had taught his little girl to call her good friend.

They had got successfully through the first chapter of "Little Arthur's History" when Mrs. Kellett was announced.

That lady entered smiling, and in gorgeous array; she declared herself charmed to see Miss Nugent, and congratulated her on having attained her majority and being her own mistress. "It is nice to be able to do as one likes," she concluded.

"Yet Byron says,

'Lord of himself, that heritage of woe,'"

returned Andrée.

"Ah, yes; but then he was a poet, so one does not mind what he says."

Andrée, as soon as Lilly had answered one or two of Mrs. Kellett's questions, sent the child to Evans, and resigned herself to cross-examination.

"So Mr. Landon is all alone at present?"

"Yes; only for a short time. Mrs. Landon has gone abroad with her sister, I am glad to say; she felt the loss of her daughter very much."

"Well, she has married very satisfactorily, and that is a comfort. They have taken a house in Longridge Square, and are furnishing it very handsomely. I am sorry your

friend Mr. Thurston is away; I wanted to see him. Dick Landon tells me he is rather a remarkable man."

"They seemed to get on very well together, which rather surprised me—they are so different."

"So it does me! I shouldn't have thought Dick would like a rival so near the throne! He is horridly jealous and deep, my dear Miss Nugent—deep as the deep sea."

"There is no occasion for the exercise of these tremendous qualities here," said Andrée, smiling.

"Why, you must know that Dick is very sweet upon you, and he is awfully afraid Mr. Thurston will cut him out."

Andrée's pale cheeks flushed crimson as the talkative woman plunged into the holy of holies, where she scarcely dared to tread herself.

"I think you are entirely mistaken, Mrs. Kellett."

"Oh, no, I am not! Tell me, didn't Dick tell you that Mr. Thurston was in love with that good-looking girl Miss Analy?"

"Why do you think so?" asked Andrée, much surprised.

"Oh, from one or two things he let drop; not that he confided anything to me, mind—I'd never stoop to betray anyone, but in the summer when he first began to come down here he used to drop in of an evening sometimes and talk of you. I think he is very anxious to marry you; it would be a capital thing for him! Charlie had mentioned Mr. Thurston before, and you know Dick and his father were horridly annoyed at your adopting that child in a sort of way; you don't know all the ill-natured things Dick said! It may not be wise, but they have no right to interfere. And I asked, just in the course of conversation, how he liked Mr. Thurston; so Dick said he was a bear, a rugged sort of fellow, quite unfit for society; clever

enough, but not difficult to bamboozle; too blunt to take an edge, however much he might be sharpened against the world. He was rather a fine-looking man, Dick admitted."

"Really, Mrs. Kellett," interrupted Andrée, with an uneasy feeling that it was disloyal to listen to this outpouring.

"Now, my dear Miss Nugent, you must let me tell you everything; it is quite right you should know; not that there is anything of much importance to repeat, only straws sometimes show how the current sets. As I was saying," she went on rapidly, "when he—Dick, I mean—mentioned that Mr. Thurston was fine-looking, or picturesque, I said—you know the idle way one talks sometimes—'I wonder, Dick, you are not afraid of his cutting you out.' He laughed, and told me in his sneering way that he was not afraid, adding, 'She has taken it into her head that Thurston is far gone on that saucy piece of goods, the girl she has taken to live with her, and she has that kind of Quixotism that wouldn't let her cast sheep's eyes on another woman's property.' So I asked, 'What put that into her head?' He exclaimed, 'Heaven knows!' And I said, 'Is she right?' again he answered, 'Heaven knows! I am sure *I* can't tell.' It then struck me that it was just the thing that Dick himself would have suggested to keep the door open for himself—don't you see? You know best who or what put the notion into your mind."

"My natural gift of observation, I suppose," returned Andrée with a little laugh. "My dear Mrs. Kellett, I thought you were a great ally of Richard Landon's, and these are the words of an enemy."

Mrs. Kellett coloured, and felt she had shown her hand too freely.

"Yes," she cried, "we are allies, I know, but he has turned his back on me, and shown me how callous and—and—double-faced he can be; and I should be sorry to see *you* fall into his hands, for I always saw you were too good for him."

"You have formerly spoken in high terms of his character and capabilities," said Andrée coldly.

"Oh law! one cannot measure one's words always. When I was friends with him, and scarcely knew you, I was ready to do him a good turn. In those days he used to pretend he was very fond of me; that I gave him the sympathy he could not find in his own family, and all that sort of rubbish; but he has never been the same to me since I went to a party at Lady Sarah Temple's, and my dress did not do him credit, I suppose, anyhow, he showed pretty plainly he was ashamed of me." She paused, out of breath.

"Very ill-bred of him, and mistaken, too, I am sure," said Andrée, startled at the bitterness of Mrs. Kellett's tone, and very anxious to end the conversation as well as the interview. "I really do not wish to hear anything more of my cousin Richard. He has always been pleasant and obliging, and I have no right whatever to suppose he wishes to be more than a friendly relative to me. I should be sorry to think he is as false as you evidently consider him."

"There are none so blind as those that won't see," said Mrs. Kellett hotly.

"Richard is coming down next week," returned Andrée; "perhaps if you study him a little more carefully you will find he is not so bad."

"Coming down here?" repeated Mrs. Kellett, with something of alarm in her tone. "You will not tell him I have been talking to you about—about——"



"I should never dream of mentioning it," said Andrée, with some disdain.

"Well, I am thinking I have been a fool for my pains," cried Mrs. Kellett, rising; I always *do* trouble too much about other people, and too little about myself. I hoped to do you a good turn, and now I dare say you will hate me, and when you and Dick are married you will just turn your backs upon me."

"If you wait till I marry Richard Landon for *my* performance of that shabby manœuvre, Mrs. Kellett, you will have a very long view of my full face!" said Andrée, laughing. "You must not take too severe a view of trifling slips of manner, probably quite unintended."

"Trifling!" repeated Mrs. Kellett, with a curious gleam in her eyes; "that is all you know." She rose to take leave.

"I must thank you for your kindness to my favourite, Lilly," said Andrée, wishing to smoothe down the angry little woman. "I do not know how long Mr. Thurston may leave her with us, but at present she seems to belong to me; she is so like her mother, too, who was a dear friend of mine and of my father's, that she is naturally precious to me."

"Oh yes, very likely," returned Mrs. Kellett in a hard tone. "By the way, one of the reasons I was anxious to call to-day was to tell you I am afraid I shall not be here many days longer. Mr. Kellett is coming down, and he prefers the Isle of Wight, so we are going to Ryde."

"Indeed; I think it is more bracing here."

"So do I, but needs must when the purse-bearer drives."

At last she was gone, and Andrée sat down to think. Yes, Mrs. Kellett was right, Richard Landon was double-faced. It could hardly be doubted that he deliberately

invented his conviction that Thurston had formed an attachment to Maud. Such an idea never presented itself to Andrée until he suggested it, and he must have spoken, as she represented, to Mrs. Kellett, who could never have known anything of the matter had not the information come from himself; indeed, in the last week or two Andrée had doubted the correctness of Richard's views herself; such hesitation on the part of Thurston was not like him. If he loved Maud, he would have asked her to be his wife long before, unless his fear of her preference for Charlie Landon had kept him back.

However the course of events went, Andrée's own position was little affected. It was more than probable that sooner or later John Thurston would marry, and though Andrée could have given Lilly up to Maud, she would feel bitterly resigning her into the hands of any other woman. Still, for the present, she would stay with her—and as to the father? Why, if he were not fretting at Maud's curious indifference, did he seem so depressed, not to say cross,—even a trifle sulky?

Mrs. Kellett sped homewards with a petty hell seething and bubbling in her poor petty heart. "I am too insignificant, he thinks, to do any harm. He fancies I am quite stingless and harmless, does he—too much impressed still with his loftiness, his high-mightiness, to attempt anything like revenge! He let me see plain enough that I was a toy that had become a bore, but he'll regret it yet! He cares for more than the girl's money; if he ever could care for anything but himself, he cares for *her*!—cold, disdainful, set-up minx! But I did tell her the truth, and she'll think it out by-and-by herself. I wish she would marry Thurston, and pay Dick Landon for me."

Not a pleasant train of thought to dwell upon, but which lasted till she came upon her children playing on

enough, but what hurts me most is that I have made him unhappy; it seems to eat into my heart. But he will get over it soon; they say men always do. I dare say he is going to propose to some other girl now—someone with money as well as good looks, and probably thinking it is very lucky I did not jump at him.”

“Nonsense, Maud! you do not really believe this! I am more distressed than I can say. Why did you not tell me you loved Charlie when you said he had asked you to marry him? I should have managed to save him from despair; but you seemed more offended than anything else.”

“So I was then, and not without reason.”

“I don’t think you have any reason, Maud, in this matter.”

“I begin to think so too! But it is all over now.”

“It certainly seems so.”

“Well, Andrée, you *are* cruel and unkind! you might give me a little hope, or suggest something.”

“I wish I could, but I don’t see what is to be suggested. It is difficult to call a man back without lowering yourself, and——”

“Oh, no, no, no!” cried Maud, clasping her hands together, “not to win a whole world of happiness! I shall be all right to-morrow, I dare say.”

“I do not think you will, Maud, and I should not like you if you were. You love Charlie more than you know. I will think what can be done.”

“No, no, Andrée; we can do nothing. I could not bear to have him *brought* back! I should hate and despise myself if I let you do anything! If he came back of himself—ah! that would be different.” A light came into her eyes at the thought, but faded quickly away.

Andrée did not speak immediately; she was in deep

hought. Maud watched her face. "No," she said at length slowly, "it would not do to take any step on our side, but I do not think it impossible that he may try again. Of course, I do not know what you wrote."

"It was a cross, unkind, disagreeable letter!" said Maud, rolling her handkerchief up into a ball and dabbing her face with it. "I wish—I wish I had it to write over again."

Andrée sighed. "There is nothing for it, then, but to wait and hope," she said.

"Nothing for it but to forget!" cried Maud, starting up. "So—so you shall hear no more of my troubles, dear Andrée; I have brought them on myself, and I must bear them. If only I had not hurt *him* too!"

"Don't fancy I am cold or harsh," said Andrée; "I feel for you with all my heart."

"Which is more than I deserve! Now, do you mind my going away to my bed, dear? I feel so tired!"

"It is the best thing you can do."

And Maud walked out of the room with a dignified air, her head held high, as if determined to resist the blows of fate.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### RECONCILIATION.

BOTH friends were eagerly alive to the interest of Thurston's letters at this time. If short, they were frequent, and contained brief reports of the success of his book, confirmed by the numerous notices and criticisms in the papers he forwarded. Of course Maud speedily devoured the volumes, then they picked out suitable bits to read to Lilly; in fact, it was their mental pabulum for two or three weeks.

Part of this time was broken in upon by a visit from Richard Landon, who was even more smooth and civil than ever. Though Andrée received him kindly, as usual, he was uncomfortably conscious that there was an indefinable change in her tone and manner.

She did not seem disposed to discuss matters nor opinions respecting which she used to argue with warmth. She had a way of letting subjects drop as if she did not care to know what Richard thought, or had no desire to bring him round to her views.

This chilled and alarmed him, for he thought he had been making progress in her good graces. He had nothing to complain of, but he was uneasy, and intensely curious as to what had occurred to create the difference he perceived more and more clearly. Still, she was ready to walk or drive with him, or to let him read aloud a new book, or to play to him when he asked her.

"Do you think of spending the winter in this rather slow little place?" he asked one afternoon, as they were returning from a reception or tea-party at Colonel Carington's, whose wife was a new acquaintance of Andrée's. "Fancy having a succession of such tea-fights as this, each a stereotyped copy of the last!"

"Most parties are copies of each other. I am not sure what I shall do. If Mr. Thurston will trust Lilly with me I should like to go to Italy in November. I think she had better not go to school again till after Easter. Or her father might send her after Christmas, in which case I would go abroad then."

"I hope you will not think I am presuming on our friendship if I venture to say that it is not prudent to adopt that child tacitly. Later on you might find it difficult to disembarass yourself of what would be a burden, when some lucky fellow succeeds in persuading you to take his name."

"Your view is the ordinary prudent one, but it does not exactly apply in this case," said Andrée very quietly.

"In what does your case differ from others?"

"In so many ways that they are too numerous for repetition."

"Which means you do not choose to enumerate them. Why have you withdrawn your confidence from me, Andrée? To give it to someone else?"

"I do not *confide* in anyone, Richard. I have nothing to confide."

"That is an evasive answer, my dear cousin. No one exists who has not something to confide."

"On looking back on our acquaintanceship, can you remember anything I have ever confided to you?" asked Andrée, raising her eyes to his.

"No, no actual fact, but there was a tone—a——"

"Then you cannot accuse me of withdrawing what I never gave."

"Really, Andrée, since you have gone through the experience of taking your property into your own hands, you have caught the trick of special pleading from the lawyers, I suppose."

"I hope not. Tell me, Richard, has your mother returned home?"

"Yes, she came last week, looking ever so much better—quite a new creature. Now she is greatly occupied with Emily's house."

"You are quite a colony at Bayswater now. But Emily is not in Chichester Gardens?"

"No; their house is in Longridge Square. By-the-by, the Kelletts are going away to what they consider a country place, a house with grounds between Hampstead and Finchley. *He* has always wanted a villa in the suburbs."

Andrée only said, "Indeed."

"By the way," resumed Richard, "wasn't Mrs. Kellett here in September?"

"She was here, but while I was in town."

"Then you did not see her?" said Richard quickly.

"Yes, I did. She called to tell me that she was going on to the Isle of Wight, so I saw no more of her."

"No great loss to you, I imagine. She is an awful gossip."

"I fancy she interests herself rather too keenly in the conduct of her neighbours."

"What particular gossip did she treat you to?"

"Nothing particular. We have very few acquaintances in common."

"She is rather ill-natured sometimes," said Richard.

"Yet I do not think she is really unkind."

He could extract nothing out of her, and his uneasiness steadily increased, and he gradually grew more and more convinced that Mrs. Kellett, intentionally or unintentionally, had put a spoke in his wheel.

He had come down to Southsea with the intention of learning his fate, and rather hopeful of success in his suit. There was something, however, in Andrée's speech and bearing that put him miles away from her, and struck him with sudden hopelessness. Was it possible that he was afraid of Andrée—a plain, ignorant (for book-knowledge counted for nothing), inexperienced nobody, at whom he would never have looked had she not been accidentally endowed with wealth? No! such an idea smacked of insanity. Still, Andrée haunted him—had haunted him for some time—but the present moment was unfavourable to his wishes. Later he might have a better chance. He had, therefore, letters by the next morning's post which obliged him to return to London. How thankful he was afterwards that he had so done.

His departure was a great relief, both to Maud and Andrée, though they did not speak on the subject. The day he left, Andrée, after a good deal of self-commune, wrote to Charlie Landon :

"DEAR CHARLIE: Mr. Thurston tells me he met you last week, and adds that you were looking worn and ill, which I was sorry to hear. I am afraid your yacht's cruise did you no good. I write to beg you will run down and stay with us, if only from Saturday to Monday. I fancy you would find the air of Southsea peculiarly reviving.

Yours very truly,

"A. NUGENT."

"If he responds favourably, all may go well," thought Andrée, as she closed the envelope. "It is rather a



tremendous 'if.' Maud must know nothing about this bold attempt; she will show her true colours if he comes unexpectedly."

Charlie's reply came by return, "You are too good to give me a chance of recovery. I hope to be with you on Saturday afternoon."

Time had stolen away swiftly, with noiseless feet, since Andrée had crossed the line which separates legal infancy from "years of discretion," and the days had been tranquilly happy. She felt sure now that Maud would in no way interfere with the close friendship which had grown up between herself and Thurston, and which she (Andrée) thought was quite sufficient to fill her life with interest and her heart with quiet satisfaction, but she longed to see him again. Of course, he must come and go as his work required, but the weeks were weary when he was not there, and the possibility of his accepting a well-paid foreign mission always flitted before her, a pale phantom of possible pain.

It was, then, with a sudden suffocating sense of overpowering pleasure that she started up, when, on the appointed Saturday, Charlie Landon presented himself, closely followed by Thurston. She was too much occupied with the delightful surprise to notice Maud, who had been urging her not to waste such a fine afternoon in the house. While Andrée welcomed Thurston calmly, though cordially, Maud stood quite still, her colour coming and going, her eyes suspiciously moist. Charlie saw these signs of emotion with joy and reviving hope.

"I hope you are not displeased with me for coming," he said humbly, "I—I thought I would risk it,—and——" He stopped abruptly.

"I am sure Andrée is very glad to see you," returned

Maud in an unsteady voice, and then he was obliged to pass on to greet his hostess.

"I have been kept on to settle this, and finish that, from day to day," said Thurston, "but when I found this venturesome fellow was coming down I could not let him have all the treat to himself. I have been longing for a holiday."

"You have brought the holiday with you," returned Andrée, the colour which had flamed in her cheek when he had so unexpectedly appeared giving brilliancy to her dark eyes, "at least for us; you have been indeed a stranger of late."

"There was not much attraction in town," said Thurston; "it has been a desert, and there is a more than usual autumnal gloom about it. However, the people are beginning to come back; the works have been oiled and cleared of dust, and the huge machine will soon be going at its usual speed. It is an overpowering place. There are two new magazines to be launched next month, another evening paper, and I don't know what more! Come, Mesdemoiselles, I am thirsting to be out on the beach, to inhale the sea-breeze. Where is my precious little daughter?"

"She is out, I am sorry to say; she went to spend the afternoon with Mrs. Carrington's grandchildren. If I had known you were coming——"

"I did not know it myself till after post hour; I met Landon by accident in the Strand, and decided to come with him."

"Suppose we go and fetch Lilly," said Andrée, "Mrs. Carrington will be very pleased to see you, then you can make her a pretty little speech, for she has been so nice and kind to Lilly, who is a prime favourite."

"Very good. I dare say Miss Anny will take

Landon for a ramble, as he cannot take care of himself."

"Oh, perhaps Mr. Landon might like to go with you, or——" stammered Maud.

"Or, being of a morose and unsociable nature, he might prefer a solitary ramble and meditation on the depravity of human nature to your trivial conversation, eh?" cried Thurston.

"I hope Miss Analy is too good-natured to spoil my brief holiday by refusing me her company," said Charlie, with an imploring look; so Maud went away to put on her most becoming hat.

They started together, and walked for a little way in company, Thurston beside Maud, and talking to her of his little girl, Charlie Landon with Andrée, to whom, after a few minutes' silence, he said abruptly, "You would not have suggested the reviving qualities of Southsea air if you did not think there was some hope for me?"

"No, I should not; I think all will come right."

"I have been awfully cut up, and riled into the bargain, Andrée. Maud was unreasonable; I never meant to offend her; she ought to have known that."

"Yes, she ought; but she has a good deal of pride, and you must forgive."

"I am rather an idiot—a weak idiot,—but I have no choice; I can't endure this misunderstanding any longer."

"This is the turn to the Carringtons' house," said Andrée, "don't lose yourselves; remember we dine at seven," and they parted company.

"I was afraid you would not have come out with me," exclaimed Charlie, as soon as the others were out of hearing; "it was very good of you. Come down on the beach

and sit down on that log there by the boat, it is quite warm to-day; I have lots to say to you."

Maud silently complied, with a kind of "I am going to be scolded" expression on her speaking face. Landon thought she had never looked more charming.

"There! you are quite sheltered, are you not?"

"Yes, quite;" she was not going to help him.

"Maud, you have been very unkind and unreasonable, have you not?"

"That is a nice way to begin," she exclaimed, "if you want to make friends with me," and drawing off her gloves and picking up the small stones at her feet as if her life depended on finding those which matched in size.

"I want to make a great deal more than friends with you, Maud, though you have made me miserable. You have always tormented me, and all I ask is to have the process continued, rather than not be with you. I dare say you think me a fool for my pains."

Maud shook her head and stole a sweet laughing glance at him.

"I should not venture to trouble you with my worries and almost forlorn hopes, had you not made me a half admission that the idea of sharing your life with me was not quite intolerable. You remember that evening on board the yacht, just before we began to quarrel?—it was a heavenly moment, Maud! Why did you take offence all at once? If I talked of setting to work cautiously with my father, dear, it was as much for your sake as my own; you know I am dependent on him, and——"

"Why should he object to me?" interrupted Maud; "I am as well born as you are, and—and—as well bred; I don't see what there is to quarrel with, except that I have no money."

"My darling! you ought to have a prince instead of a 'prentice solicitor; but all the blood royal in Europe could not throb for you more warmly than mine does. Don't you know, that if you were an angel come down straight from heaven, wings and all, my father would rather pick out the darkest she-devil in hell to mate with his promising boy, provided she brought enough 'filthy lucre' wherewith to daub her darkness. It isn't you, dearest, he would or could object to, it is your impecuniosity. Do be reasonable, Maud; don't be decalogical, and visit the sins of the father on the children; all I want is not to ask his consent till after the New Year, then I shall be a partner, and therefore in a better position, from which he cannot dislodge me."

"Won't that be a little like cheating?" asked Maud, letting her stones drop in her lap.

"I do not know; what I do know, is the indefeasible right of an Englishman to choose his own wife, and for his own sake my father will push my fortunes in the way that costs him least. Maud, are you sorry you have given me two such wretched months? I did not think you would have written to me so unkindly. I made up my mind that you did not care a straw about me."

Maud played with her stones for a minute in silence, then she said in a low voice, "I think I care *two* straws."

There was something infinitely caressing in her tone.

"My darling!" he cried, slipping his arm round her and darting a quick glance at the long strip of beach before them, where not a creature was to be seen. "Then you forgive the offence I never dreamed of your finding in what I said? you will promise to be my wife as soon as I can claim you? you will give me your heart?"

Maud's only reply was to turn slowly to him and let him press his lips long and fondly to hers.

And so the reconciliation was complete. Then came one of those rare hours of blissful interchange of hopes, of anticipations, of heaven, which gild the present, however near may be the cloud and the storm; enjoy it while you can, for such moments are rarely repeated.

Landon, much as he desired to do so, dared not prolong his stay in the paradise which Maud's unexpected candour and tenderness had created for him; he was obliged to tear himself away on the appointed Monday. First, however, he had a long consultation with her and Andrée, whom they at once took into their counsels. All recognized the difficulty of dealing with the autocrat of Chichester Gardens, and agreed that for some little time the engagement must be kept a secret. This did not damp the joy of the newly affianced. They were young and full of hope; time would work wonders they were convinced; and so, in full confidence that the future held nothing but good, they parted cheerfully enough.

"I don't know," said Thurston at dinner, the day after Charlie Landon had returned to town, "I don't know whether the sight of those young creatures," and he nodded to Maud, "has suggested the idea or not, but it has come into my head to write a novel."

"Oh, yes, pray do!" cried Maud, clapping her hands; "I am sure you would do it well."

"There are passages in your book, little touches of character, which give me the impression that you might succeed in fiction," said Andrée thoughtfully; "but it must be a very different style from journalism."

"It is, and I am not sure that journalism is a good preparation for it; certainly not for history or more solid subjects. I have reviewed lots of novels, however, and that ought to give me some insight into the mystery of construction. I shall try and develop a central notion

into a plot, and tell it to you, Andrée. Your sentence shall decide me."

"Not mine!" she exclaimed earnestly; "I dare not accept such a responsibility."

"You are not a bad judge of books, Andrée. I have sometimes thought you have the critical faculty. Of course I could only work at it intermittently, as the newspaper and magazine articles, which are my daily bread, give me time."

"I would try it, John," said Andrée earnestly. "It would be immensely interesting; I should watch its progress with so much pleasure."

"And you would read it all aloud to us before anyone else knew a word about it!" exclaimed Maud.

"Read my own book aloud? Heaven forbid!" cried Thurston, laughing. "Well, you are both very encouraging. I'll see if the inspiration lasts, and follow my bent."

"Do have a big dog or a child in it. Lilly would be lovely in a book," said Maud eagerly.

"What, make copy out of my dainty little daughter? No, Miss Analy! I should prefer making *you* pose for your picture."

"Monster!" she cried; "what a threat! If you do, mind you make an angel of me."

"We should all prefer the real Maud Analy, minus any impossible heavenly attributes," said Andrée.

"One advantage of a novel is, that it's a kind of mental stock-pot; every scrap of experience one has ever had, any odds and ends of out-of-the-way knowledge one has picked up, old friends, chance acquaintances, all can be thrown in and all are of use in giving flavour to the brew."

"I dare say. It must be an *olla podrida* to which *nothing* comes amiss. But whatever else you do,

John, be sure you keep within the bounds of probability."

"I will try, and also avoid those amazing and incredible coincidences and accidents which often occur in real life, but, put in fiction, are especially unmanageable."

From this time, during the next few weeks, during which Thurston came frequently to and fro, the novel was often discussed, and the subject of many jests and much laughter.

November with its fogs and gloom was now upon them; a period in that particular year long remembered in the City for its disastrous failures and general depression.

At the seaside that suicidal month loses half its horrors; its fogs are shifting mist often dispersed by the sun, and when a fine day does come, the sea and sky are as blue and smiling as in summer, while the absence of leafless trees keeps the idea of winter at a distance. It had been a bright, mild day, and Maud had returned with Lilly from an early walk in time, and quite ready for luncheon. Andrée looked at her friend with heartily admiring eyes. Since she had come to a full understanding with her lover there was a radiant happiness beaming in her eyes and playing round her lips that made her beautiful.

"You have had a letter from Charlie to-day?" asked Andrée, smiling.

"Yes; this is the day I have one always. He says his father is awfully anxious, and rather unwell, because things are looking gloomy in the City; though of course a legal firm cannot be much affected by commercial smashes,—indeed their business is rather increased than not. He says, too, that he met Mr. Thurston in the city



yesterday, or the day before, walking with that rich Jew man he was staying with in Yorkshire, and that he looked as if he had the weight of the world on his shoulders."

"I hope he has met with no——" Andrée was beginning, when the door was thrown open, and their attendant landlord announced "Mr. Thurston."

"We were just speaking of you," cried Andrée, rising to shake hands with him, while her eyes sought his with the eagerness of true affection, to trace, if possible, some indication of good or evil in his mood or fortunes; he was, however, absolutely calm, "we had no hope of seeing you before Saturday."

"It was a sudden thought," he returned, when he had kissed Lilly and greeted Maud. "I want to talk to you, Andrée, about a matter of business, and as a few spoken words will do more than half-a-dozen letters, I am here, and hungry as a hunter."

Whereupon both girls proceeded to supply his needs with thoughtful care, talking gaily the while, until he cried, "Hold, enough!"

"I am going to run away by the three-thirty train," he said, looking at his watch as they left the table, "as I have to dine with —— and Damer at eight. Damer has only just returned to town, and it will be a close shave. I must see you alone, Andrée."

Maud and her young charge therefore retired to the latter's play-room, and Andrée, with some uneasiness and curiosity fluttering at her heart, led the way to the pretty drawing-room, which seemed so homelike to Thurston. He looked round it with regretful eyes, which then fixed themselves on Andrée's with a yearning, tender look which surprised and thrilled her.

"I have come to test your faith in me, Andrée," he

said, drawing a chair opposite to her, as she resumed the seat she generally occupied on the sofa, beside her work-basket.

"I am quite ready to be put to the test, but you startle me."

"I am going to startle you still further. I am in want of a large sum of money; will you give it to me?"

"Yes, of course. How much?" said Andrée quietly.

Thurston looked very steadily into her eyes for half a second, and then said deliberately, "I want twelve hundred pounds to-morrow."

"Very well, John; I will write you a cheque."

"Thank you. Make it payable to yourself, and enclose it in a little note asking that the cash may be given to the bearer—your friend Mr. Thurston."

"I will do so." She went to an ornamental bureau at the end of the room, where she wrote for a few minutes, and then came back to him with the cheque and the note, which she gave him to read.

"Thank you, Andrée. You observe I have not offered you any acknowledgment of this money, and I do not intend to offer you any. It is a free gift."

"Yes; I understand it so."

Thurston put the note and cheque in the envelope, fastened and placed it in his breast-pocket.

"You have wonderful faith in me, Andrée."

"I trust you utterly, John. If you want more——"

"You touch me to the soul," he interrupted with emotion. "Believe me, I am not unworthy of your trust. I wonder what you think of this extraordinary action on my part?"

"I do not think at all. Some day you will tell me your reason, if you choose—not unless. I shall never ask,

only I have a sort of conviction that it is not for yourself. Some day——”

“Some day,” interrupted Thurston in his turn, “I will tell you every thought and aspiration of my soul, but not to-day. I will leave you now, because I dare not trust myself to speak more.” He paused a moment, still holding her hand, which he had taken in both his. “Another question, Andrée. How much money have you in the house?”

“Not much—between thirty and forty pounds. I have just paid up everything for the month, as I always do,—rent, Maud, everything.”

“Have you many bills?”

“No, scarcely any; I like to pay for clothes and things when I get them.”

“Quite right. Don’t make extensive purchases till I see you again.”

“What *has* gone wrong, John?”

“Nothing, I hope; there may be a temporary tightness. But,” interrupting himself, “I must not stay. God bless you, my sweet friend. Good-bye for a few days. I do not think I can come down on Saturday. Good-bye.”

He was gone; and Andrée, almost dizzy with surprise at his tone, his bearing, gazed after him, too much confused for distinct thought.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THERE REMAINETH A REST.

THE succeeding days were different from any Andrée had ever spent before. She was unusually silent, Maud observed, though especially kind and thoughtful for her companions. Her mind was filled with vague conjecture and uneasiness as to what was going to happen; for that some change was impending she felt convinced, apart from any reason. But through this unrestful mental condition a strain of sweetness floated, like the low, wave-like melody of an Æolian harp.

What was it of unwonted tenderness in Thurston's voice that made his words like a caress, though the words themselves were nothing? Why did he doubt for a moment that she would share all she had with him? But he did not. Why did he want that money? Not for any purpose of his own, she felt sure. Some difficulty was about to overtake her, and was casting its shadow before. Then she comforted herself with the remembrance of the solid bulwark of £ s. d. between herself and most material ills, and strove to turn her thoughts from the puzzle to which she so sorely needed a key.

To Maud she would not, of course, breathe a word of Thurston's real object in asking for a private interview; that was a sacred secret that no one must ever know. So Andrée waited patiently for the explanation, as she would have waited for years.

Four days passed somewhat slowly, during which Andrée had no letter. Late on in the evening of the fourth, however, came a telegram—"Will be with you early to-morrow morning.—Thurston."

"Will he come to breakfast?" asked Maud, to whom Andrée read it.

"I don't think he can; the first train does not get in till ten—unless, indeed, he started at six o'clock, which is not likely."

"Very true. Well, let us be ready early, and I will take Lilly out; for I am sure Mr. Thurston will want to talk to you on business."

"Perhaps he may."

Andrée was ashamed of her own nervous mixture of dread and longing for the morrow; her sleep was broken both by fits of wakefulness and troubled dreams.

She beheld a dull, wet morning when her shutters were open, with showers of misty rain sweeping across the sea.

She rose and dressed earlier than usual. Entering the dining-room, she found that Maud and her little pupil were equally active.

"What an awfully dreary morning," cried the former. "Lilly and I are going to have a grand morning's work; afterwards I am going to ask papa to have a serious examination, and look at Lill's copies, etc.; I think he will be very pleased."

"Do you think he will, auntie?" asked the child, with an anxious look on her sweet face.

"Yes, my darling; he does not know what a learned little daughter he has."

Lilly laughed merrily; she had her father's quick sense of fun. "He will get me a trencher cap, like college boys, perhaps," she said.

Maud and Lilly had disappeared into the apartment which was both play and school-room, and Andrée had made up a fine fire to counteract the outside gloom, yet it was but little past nine when Thurston came in.

"How is it you are here so soon?" cried Andrée, coming to meet him with smiling lips and eyes, eagerly watching the expression in his, and perceiving that they were grave—grave to seriousness—and that he looked somewhat worn and anxious.

"I came down late last night," said Thurston, still holding her hand closely; "I did not want to disturb you sooner than was necessary. Have you seen the paper?"

"No, I have not opened it yet."

"I am not the bearer of good news," he resumed, setting a chair for her and taking his stand on the hearthrug. "You have a stout heart, Andrée, so I will not beat about the bush. One of the worst smashes the City has ever seen took place yesterday; your bank, Witham and Wells, have closed their door. It is a complete collapse."

"Do you mean that I shall lose all the money that is in it?" asked Andrée, more bewildered than stunned.

"Everything is gone! They have made a frightful hash of their funds; invested in all sorts of worthless stock, and, in short, it is black ruin all round. The suffering will be cruel."

"But, John, I have other money, not very much, still, enough in railways and New Zealand funds, and——"

"My dear child, you don't know! but this is, unfortunately, not a limited company, and everything you possess will be swept away as assets to meet the claims of depositors and others."

"Can nothing be done, John?" asked Andrée, growing very white, but keeping her composure wonderfully unruffled.

"Nothing, Andrée! it cuts me to the soul to have to tell you so. Let me try to explain," and he went on to explain the reasons why the shareholders in a joint-stock bank were liable for the debts of the concern. "There never was a more unexpected catastrophe," he continued. "Luckily I got a hint of what might possibly happen from my friend, who is very much behind the scenes in financial matters, that is why I came to you last week and asked you to give me twelve hundred pounds; I need not, I know, tell you that although I have banked it safely in my own name, I hold it for you. I did not attempt to vest it in the name of trustees, or guard it in any way; only making a free gift of the sum to a friend could save it; for by an Act passed only last year, no settlement made within several years, I believe, is safe from the claims of a bankrupt's creditor."

"No settlement!" echoed Andrée, clasping her hands; "this is worst of all!"

"Why? have you made one?" he asked quickly.

"You shall hear all about it later; let me know how I stand."

"That is easily told; all you can count on is whatever ready money you have in the house and the cash in my hands."

Andrée let one hand drop, and putting her elbow on the table, rested her head on the other. There was a brief silence.

"I did not know how riches had enervated me, and made me shrink from the roughness of poverty—from the hard life with which I was so familiar," she said in a low voice. "I had made so many pleasant plans; I wanted to help Maud too—poor dear Maud!"

"Do not trouble about Maud," exclaimed Thurston, "she shall be my charge for some time to come; I am

only too glad to secure her care for my little Lilly ; you and I will see to that, Andrée. If I might advise, I would suggest that the sooner you clear out of this and settle somewhere in the suburbs of London the better."

"Yes, yes ; I am trying to think," said Andrée, looking up with a strange dazed look. "Don't think me a coward, John, but it is hard to give up everything so soon."

"A coward !" echoed Thurston, who had walked away to the window and back ; "a truer-hearted, braver woman never lived ; I have often wondered at your moderation, your unselfishness." He paused, and then rushed on. "These months have been torture long drawn out to me, for I dared not utter the words which have been so often at my lips, yet would not utter when you had everything and myself comparatively nothing. You must indeed be indifferent to me if you do not see, if you do not feel, that I love you warmly, truly, gratefully, for you have given me back something of youth's hopeful sweetness ! Now, dear," and he took her hand in both his own, "I can be of some use to you ; take my life—let me help you—let me work for you ! Help *me* with my little girl, and it will go hard but we shall win both pleasure and profit out of life ! Am I too abrupt ? have I presumed too far ?"

"John," she said solemnly, "do not let your compassion for my misfortunes carry you away ; you are naturally generous——"

"Generous to myself," he interrupted. "Do you not see in my eyes, and hear in my voice, the ardent love I bear you ; the aftermath of affection as true and deep as the first, with which you are so closely associated !" he drew her to him as he spoke. "Andrée, I have sometimes thought there was a strong sympathy between us ; there have been moments when I have thought you could be



happy with me. I did not intend to tell you this; I did not mean to couple my sincere offer of assistance—of brotherly help—with such a prayer; but, Andrée——” He paused, for she slowly raised her eyes to his with a look so expressive that he pressed her to his heart, his strong face lighting up with sudden joy. “Will you be my wife—my own? and there will be no more loneliness for either of us.”

“If I could only have brought the ease and luxury of wealth with me!” she murmured, as she gave herself to his tender embrace.

“I only want yourself!” said Thurston.

“You have lost all your money!” cried Maud, when Andrée summoned her some considerable time afterwards, and had tried to explain the catastrophe which had befallen her; “why, you look as if you had succeeded to another fortune!”

“I may have lost my fortune, but I have gained my soul,” returned Andrée. “Listen, Maud, because I have lost everything Mr. Thurston wishes to take me for better, for worse, and I have promised to marry him.”

“Of course you have!” said Maud; “it was always plain, at least to me, what *he* wanted. He is a real dear, Andrée, and worth two or three fortunes.”

“I think so, certainly; but oh, Maud, I wish I could give him the fortune I have lost, and save him all care and trouble for the future.”

“You will be quite happy enough,” said Maud with a wise air, “both of you. But is everything really gone? The law ought not to allow such things—such wholesale robbery!”

“I don’t see how they are to be prevented; indeed, the law seems to make matters especially hard for me.

But, Maud, we must be up and doing, for Mr. Thurston wants us to go to town as soon as possible, and to settle up everything here. I must see the people of the house and explain matters to them. Of course I cannot afford to live any longer in this way. Thank heaven I have not spent more money. Poor Evans! how sorry she will be to leave us; she must stay till she finds an engagement. Mr. Thurston is going back to town this evening to find a small house or an apartment for us, and we must leave the day after to-morrow. Do write by the mid-day post and let Charlie Landon know, or he may come here on Saturday. I have asked John to try and find quarters for us as near Mrs. Damer as possible."

Sincere was the regret, respectful the sympathy, shown by Andrée's landlord and his wife. The loss of so profitable a tenant was, of course, keenly felt; but, besides this natural feeling, there was true personal liking, which urged everyone in the house to help heartily in the sudden packing up and removal.

As to Maud, seeing she was not to be parted from her dear Andrée or her precious pupil immediately, she wisely took no thought for the morrow, and was quite as gaily helpful as she had been when they settled themselves in their Southsea home, and the future seemed one long smooth path full of sunshine and flowers.

The next morning's post brought her a letter from her lover, which sent her flying to Andrée, who was looking through some bills and papers.

"Oh, Andrée, poor Mr. Landon is so ill—he has had a paralytic stroke! Charlie says—oh, where is it?—here—  
'My poor father, who was of a very anxious temperament, in spite of his cold exterior, has been visibly affected by the sort of uneasy feeling existing in the City for some time. It seems that he had made some considerable savings and

invested them in bank shares in the Royal Provincial Bank. This is certain to smash, being closely connected with Witham and Wells. Fortunately it is a limited company, so the loss of his shares, though serious, will not touch his capital nor interfere with his business. The effect on him, however, has been disastrous. When, the day before yesterday, the news was brought to him that Witham and Wells had smashed, he fell back insensible, seized with a paralytic shock. You can judge what a time we have had since. My poor mother is overwhelmed, yet wonderfully brave. I am most thankful that I am now a partner instead of an *employé*, as I am, in consequence, able to be of much greater use to my father and the firm. Pray tell Andrée how awfully concerned I am about the frightful ruin which has fallen upon her. I cannot write at present, for I scarcely know how to get through this letter. Thank God, darling, you are coming to town for——' There," said Maud, stopping abruptly, "isn't that dreadful? Gold was that poor Mr. Landon's god! Fancy breaking one's heart and stopping one's circulation about money!"

"It is the wife I feel for," exclaimed Andrée; "she has been in prison all her life, and now she is chained to a dead creature."

"Well, Andrée, he never was really alive."

After a little more talk Maud went away to write a few lines of loving sympathy to her *fiancé*, and Andrée continued her work of preparation.

On reaching town the travellers found that Thurston had done wonders. He had found an abode for them in a neat row of houses very near the Damers, where bright fires and comfortable high tea awaited them. Also, full of kindly welcome, came Mr. and Mrs. Damer, who, after hearty condolences with Andrée on the disastrous turn of

fortune's wheel, began to exclaim at her cheerful equanimity, Mrs. Damer adding, "But I know the reason of your fortitude," and congratulation quickly followed condolence. Then a long business talk ensued, which only showed Andrée the hopeless condition of her affairs at present.

When the Damers had left them, and Maud had taken Lilly to bed, Thurston came to Andrée, and, clasping her in his arms, exclaimed, "Not till this morning did I know of your generous, thoughtful attempt to provide for my dear child; talking over things with Damer he told me of your settlement upon her. It is all in vain now, but none the less am I grateful for your goodness—for your attachment to my little Lilly."

"I love her doubly; I was doubly anxious to assure her future," returned Andrée, leaning her head against him with a sense of ineffable rest, "because I see her sweet mother in her. Her memory will always live in both our hearts."

A brief hour of tender, confidential interchange of thoughts and hopes ensued—one of those rare glimpses of what life might be could selfishness and falsehood but be swept away, and love and truth rule existence from pole to pole.

Andrée was greatly affected by the nearly childish condition in which she found her uncle. She lost no time in calling on Mrs. Landon, who told her that, in spite of appearances, Mr. Landon had been ailing for some time, and that overwork had prepared the way only too well for the shock he had received.

Something in the cold, precise aspect of the house, the silence, the rigidly dutiful attentions of the invalid's wife, struck a chill into Andrée's heart. "There is no

life, no touch of the divine glow of affection," she said to Maud. "The only real human creature among them is Charlie, and you must keep his heart alive with affection and brightness."

"It is very much alive at present," said Maud, with a smile and a blush—"he wants to be married when you and Mr. Thurston are. He says there is nothing to wait for, and he has broken the matter to his mother, who would be thankful to know that Charlie would not be alone; for they are going to take poor Mr. Landon to Torquay for the winter."

"An excellent plan," cried Andrée. "I, for one, entirely approve."

For some little time Richard Landon made no sign. He was not in town, and Charlie knew nothing of him. When their father was struck down he was active and sympathetic, making himself useful to his mother. He then informed his brother that he did not wish to interfere in the family affairs, that his father had some years before given him a considerable sum of money, and that he did not expect much more. He then went "out of town," and was not heard of till one day, returning with Maud from a shopping expedition, Andrée found his card. On it was written in pencil, "Sorry to miss you. Am going abroad; will write." But no letter ever came.

"You'll never hear anything more of him," was Thurston's comment. "There is no truth in the fellow. I was half-inclined to like him at first, but when I read his first pamphlet it struck me I had read something very like it before; so, after grubbing into the cairn of my memory, I thought I found the clue. So I looked up an old acquaintance, a pressman—a clever, drunk, dissipated chap, 'his own enemy' sort of man—and asked him if he had ever succeeded in getting some pamphlets of his printed

—brilliant, wild productions. He said no, no one would risk them, and he had no means to publish on his own account—‘but,’ he added, ‘I got a tolerable price for them. An ambitious, clever young fellow bought them and thickened them with the raw flour of his own exceeding common sense, till they were stodgy enough to suit the British public, which prefers suet pudding to puff pastry.’ ”

“I can scarcely believe Richard would be such a sham!” cried Andrée indignantly.

“Curious, isn’t it? My poor old brother journalist would not tell the name of the purchaser, but there’s the tale as it was told to me.”

“I have had a letter I should like you to read,” resumed Andrée, after a short pause; “it surprised me very much,” and she handed it to him. It was written on very thick, creamy paper, in a large, firm hand :

“MY DEAR MISS NUGENT : I have just heard of your terrible losses. Someone must be to blame; I wish I had the power to punish that someone. You have, I imagine, always considered me a selfish, fanciful, arrogant woman, and treated me as such. Perhaps I am. At all events, I have from the first had a fancy for you. Will you come abroad with me for the winter, and stay a year with me, till this storm be overpassed? I shall be pleased and well-tempered for so long, I *think*. After, you shall do as you like. I will give you a hundred a year for pocket-money, and time enough to read all the solemn books in all the libraries. Think over this, and come to tea with me on Tuesday—to say ‘Yes,’ I hope.

“Yours sincerely,

“SARAH TEMPLE.”

“A curious epistle! That eagle-eyed old woman is not *without discrimination*,” said Thurston.

"I feel quite grateful to her," replied Andrée, "and," she added, laughing, "still more so to you, for providing me with such an excellent reason why I cannot say 'Yes'! I shall go and see her, however, and you must come and fetch me, and be introduced."

There is little more to be told.

A very quiet double wedding ended this portion of their history for the two friends.

After a few months in Italy, during which Thurston wrote that well-known novel of his, he and Andrée settled down in a modest but infinitely happy home near the Landons, where the busy days of work and play knew no weary hours. Lilly continued the most precious treasure of both parents, and adds the inexpressible charm of budding youth to the circle of interesting and remarkable men and women which gathered round their popular fellow-worker, John Thurston, and his charming wife.

THE END.

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